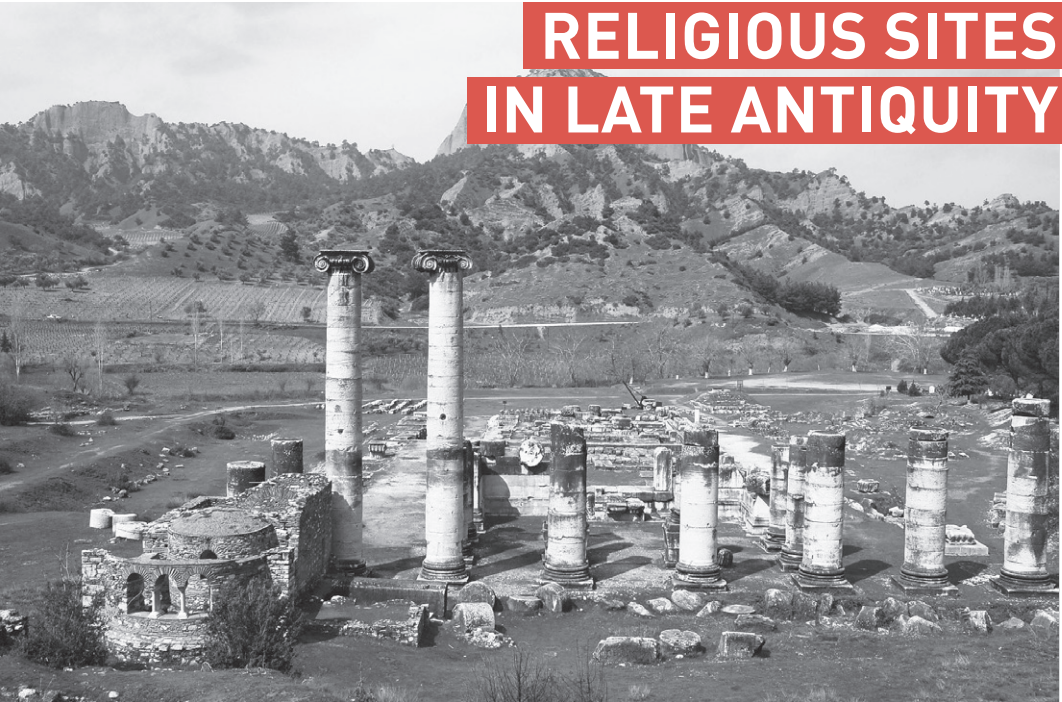


Francesco Massa and Maureen Attali (eds.)

SHARED RELIGIOUS SITES IN LATE ANTIQUITY



Negotiating Cultural
and Ritual Identities
in the Eastern Roman Empire

SCHWABE VERLAG

ReLAB



Series “ReLAB”

Editor: Francesco Massa

The series intends to study the Roman Empire as a “religious laboratory”, i.e., an intellectual space of development, production, and experimentation of new religious concepts. All volumes focus on the religious interactions that crossed the multicultural, multireligious, and globalized space of the Roman Empire, especially in Late Antiquity.

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Shared Religious Sites in Late Antiquity

**Negotiating Cultural and Ritual Identities
in the Eastern Roman Empire**

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Preface

Maureen Attali and Francesco Massa

1. From holy/sacred places to multi-religious spaces

Much scholarly effort has in the last decades been devoted to the topic of ‘shared religious space’, in the wake of a new research trend examining the construction of religious identities and their plurality. Among the most famous of those shared sites, one can mention the Ghriba synagogue on the island of Djerba (Tunisia), visited by Muslim and Christian believers alongside Jews since the beginning of the 20th century. The St. George church on the island of Büyükada (Istanbul, Turkey) attracts pilgrims of various backgrounds and religions, especially Muslim women.¹ Reflections on this theme were first initiated by anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists, and archaeologists and historians followed suit. The first major publications were devoted to contemporary instances, mainly focusing on the concept of when involving Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in both Europe and the Mediterranean.² The same approach was simultaneously applied to other parts of the world, where similar spatial dynamics were observed, and especially to East, South, and South-East Asia, with a major focus on the relationship between Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims;³ further investigations then included yet other parts of the world, beginning with Central and South America.⁴ Such studies also deal with spatial sharing among various subgroups of the same religion.⁵ Specialists of the topic resort to an anthropological terminology based on a theology of space that is considered as being common to all those various religious traditions: as such, they describe their topic as “shared holy places” or as “sacred spaces/sites”. The category of “shared religious sites” is now discussed in a growing number of academic studies; it also generates a major interest in the wider public, as indicated by the success of a 2015 French exhibition, produced in multiple versions successively shown in Tunisia, Macedonia, Greece, Morocco, the United States, and Turkey.⁶

1 See Albera, Couroucli 2011 [2009].

2 See Fowden 2002, and Albera, Couroucli 2011 [2009].

3 See Bigelow 2010, and the ANR-funded research project (2018–2021) entitled *The Indian Subcontinent’s Shared Sacred Sites*: <https://ishare.hypotheses.org/>.

4 See Hayden *et al.* 2016.

5 See Bowman 2012; Barkan, Barkey 2015.

6 The exhibition “Shared sacred sites” opened at the MuCEM (Marseille) in 2015 and then at the French National Museum of the History of Immigration (Paris) in 2017.

While studies on contemporary or very recent cases of shared religious sites often presented them as the latest development of an earlier phenomenon, precise overviews devoted to occurrences in earlier time-periods were initially dispersed and only progressively included in collective books which now span several centuries, sometimes millennia.⁷ This broadening of the geographical and chronological scope of the field ultimately led to a terminological evolution. While studying current projects aimed at creating (non-sacred) shared space to be used by members of different religions, Marian Burchardt and Maria Chiara Giorda proposed to introduce the category of “multi-religious spaces”, defined as “localities of different scales which have been established, owned, inhabited, and used by different religious groups in earlier historical periods, or are jointly used by them as such in the present [and] are claimed by two or more communities of different religious traditions”.⁸

Scholars who devote part of their research to the sharing of religious sites form a close-knit academic network. Most are listed as members of the “Shared Sacred Sites” project.⁹ The project includes the “Visual Hasluck” website, with digital maps based on the pioneering work of Frederick William Hasluck who, in the beginning of the 20th century, studied places where Christians and Muslims competed in the Ottoman empire.¹⁰ For each site, a set of information is given: its name, its geographical location, its topography or landscape, the main religious groups and subgroups using it, the specific uses and practices documented there as well as the pattern of transitions of interactions found at the site.¹¹ Five such patterns are identified: “Christian sites used by Muslims”; “Muslim sites used by Christians”; “Converted: ‘Christian to Muslim’ or ‘Christian to secular’”; “Continuity: (Pre-Christian to) Christian to Muslim”.¹² While it is impossible to sum up all the debated topics about the category of “shared sacred space”, two main trends can be identified, both focusing on the implication of spatial sharing.

Some scholars, mainly anthropologists, emphasize the peaceful or even irenic character of the sharing, focusing on cases where no confrontation arose between religious groups for dozens or even hundreds of years.¹³ They are also

7 For an early article on an antique shared religious site, see Kofsky 1998. See Hayden *et al.* 2016.

8 Burchardt, Giorda 2021, 4.

9 <https://www.sharedsacredsites.net/>.

10 Hasluck 1973 [1929].

11 See the maps “Sacred Sites: Conversion, Co-Existence, Interaction” and “Ambiguous Sites: The Geographical Distribution of the Bektashi” at <http://vh.dimaterialist.net/explore/maps/>.

12 See the five available layers on these maps at <http://vh.dimaterialist.net/explore/maps/sacred-sites/>.

13 Albera, Couroucli 2011 [2009].

the driving force behind the dissemination of knowledge on shared religious sites, explicitly establishing a connection between academic endeavors and the need to fight currently rising interreligious tensions; they aspire at promoting interfaith dialogue by replacing it within a historical tradition.¹⁴

Conversely, according to another social sciences trend, conflicts that involve religions are more prone to radicalization, because “sacred values” remain impervious to rational compromises.¹⁵ Such studies focus on post-Second-World-War wars as well as currently unresolved international conflicts as a starting point, with a clear predilection for the Yugoslav wars, the Indo-Pakistani wars, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, i.e., armed conflicts involving (proto)state-entities. They are usually conducted by international relations scholars, sometimes themselves personally involved in conflict resolution efforts, who explain their failure by the supposed specificity of at least partially religiously motivated conflict, in which violence is presented as inevitable. Shared religious sites, interpreted as “contested”, are not the focus, but one expression of the inherently violent nature of religions amongst many others. In larger-scale studies where “conflict over sacred spaces” are precisely analyzed, the argumentation is devoted to famous contentious sites (e.g., the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the Tombs of the Patriarchs in Hebron, the Hagia Sophia mosque in Istanbul, Mecca), concluding that sharing will always end in violence.¹⁶

Anthropologists who study the sharing of religious sites often deal with a broad chronological scope, replacing current litigious and violently disputed locations within a historical context spanning hundreds of years, if not millennia. As such, they mostly dip into Antiquity by referring to seized, sometime destroyed, and replaced religious buildings, even though they are aware of the many recent studies pointing out the rarity of such dramatic occurrences.¹⁷

Conversely, international relations scholars, when they wish to prove the relevance of their conclusions for earlier time-periods, and especially for Late Antiquity, tend to conflate various written sources of very different nature, quoting Biblical verses, imperial laws, polemical writings, and councils’ canons indistinctly, without much regard for the chronological and geographical contexts, to say nothing of the legal and social situations.

14 For instance, the educational booklet of the Paris exhibition refers to the “burning question of religious coexistence” after the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris and spells out the curators’ intent to “overcome religious boundaries” (*Shared sacred sites* 2017, 4).

15 Atran, Axelrod, Davis 2007, and Atran, Ginges 2012.

16 See Hassner 2009, 53–69.

17 See the references to Caseau 2004, Foschia 2009, and Lavan 2011 in Hayden *et al.* 2016, 140.

2. The origin of the project: religious competition and the “antagonistic tolerance” model

Within the context of the current research on multi-religious spaces, we wanted to examine if, and if yes how, the dynamics of sharing were realized within the microcosm of the multireligious and multicultural Late Roman Empire. This enquiry is part of a project on “Religious competition in Late Antiquity”, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and hosted by the University of Fribourg (2019–2023).¹⁸ In Graeco-Roman Antiquity, competition was central in politics, culture, economics, festivals, and sport.¹⁹ As Jörg Rüpke puts it, the Roman Empire lives in a “competitive pluralism”.²⁰ This situation, as we know, does not merely reflect the presence of several strictly differentiated religious communities.²¹ In this way, religious competition is not to be understood as a static process. It could be better described as an interaction between two or more religious identities that can be activated in specific moments for a political, social, or economic reason.

Even if some studies have rightly shown that “religious competition” is a fluid concept,²² religious competition excludes the simple coexistence without interaction between people that perceive themselves (or are perceived) as belonging to different religious groups. This does not mean that the various forms of interactions involving such groups were necessarily expressed through conflict (more or less violent). It does not mean either that we need to postulate the existence of a political or religious authority “tolerant” of other cults. Competition is a form of interaction likely to be set up when several groups or people cohabit on the same territory, seeking to increase their members and to express (discursively and/or ritually) their differences, even if they are constantly influenced by each other.²³

Our research on competitive dynamics led us to look at the theories formulated by Robert Hayden, who has problematized the notion of competition in relation with the sharing of religious sites since 2002; his research was therefore the perfect starting point for an exploration of shared religious sites as a manifestation of religious competition during Late Antiquity. Since he published his first article on “Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the

18 See the website of the project: <https://relab.hypotheses.org>.

19 For instance, see Lendon 1997.

20 Rüpke 2014, 181.

21 Recent studies have warned us against the so-called “danger of groupism”: see recently Ullucci 2019 and Rebillard 2020.

22 Engels, Van Nuffelen 2014, 11–12 and Naerebout 2016.

23 On the use of the notion of “religious competition” in Late Antiquity, see Massa 2022.

Balkans”, Hayden has been pursuing this topic.²⁴ Between 2007 and 2012, he assembled an international and interdisciplinary team of scholars to broaden the chronological and geographical scope of his analyses and refine his model of occupancy dynamics, named “Antagonistic Tolerance”. Their case studies and conclusions are set out in their 2016 collective volume entitled *Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites and Spaces*.²⁵

Hayden’s research aims at describing the long-term patterns of relationship between members of groups who self-identify as belonging to different religions and share the same space. Following Fredrik Barth’s analysis of ethnic groups as “ascriptive”, collective identities are considered as defined by their boundaries, implying clear distinctions between communities perceived as ‘Self’ and ‘Other’.²⁶ Religious affiliation, and thus religious distinction between groups, is described as reinforced by visibly differing social customs. Tolerance is defined as “enduring the presence of the Other but not embracing it, as long as one group is clearly dominant over others”.²⁷ Dominance includes the political authority and the capacity to exert it over space: it enables one group to control access to religious sites. The spatial interactions between the dominant and the dominated groups are interpreted as expressions of Antagonistic Tolerance. Politico-religious groups compete for dominance and oscillate between dominance and subordination, and when one group is clearly dominant, its leaders usually permit religious Others to access most religious sites they lay claim to, while also ensuring access for the members of their own dominant group. Critically, a change in dominance will usually lead to a change in the visible identity of the most central and prominent sites in a settlement, such as the Hagia Sophia’s transformation from church to mosque in 1453. According to the Antagonistic Tolerance model, relations between the groups are characterized by “long periods of relatively peaceful interaction between different religious communities as long as political dominance is clear, interspersed with periods of violence when dominance is challenged or overturned”.²⁸ However, when dominance is contested, access and control are often contested, too. Religious sites therefore work as indicators of dominance.

While he originally focused on the studies of single sites, Hayden then developed his model and concluded that focusing on individual sites was actually misleading. Sites should be considered together as part of religious landscapes or “religioscapes”, defined as “physical markers of the space in which practitioners

24 See Hayden 2002, 2005, 2013 and Hayden, Walker 2013.

25 Hayden *et al.* 2016.

26 Barth 1969, cited by Hayden 2022.

27 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 10.

28 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 48.

of a given religious community interact”;²⁹ shared sites are then markers of overlapping religioscapes. The respective evolution of each group’s religioscape can inform us on the state of relations between them. First, the dominant can overtake the dominated group’s religious sites and orchestrate their subsequent destruction, modification, or transformation. In general, dominance is exhibited by “centrality”, i. e., the capacity to settle or to build, sometimes monumentally, on politically, socially, or theologically significant locations.³⁰ Indicators of dominance consequently alter the religioscapes, as part of what is usually seen as a deliberate policy on the dominating group’s part. “The seizure and appropriation of sacred space and objects of other religions, and even the use of such sacra by the community that has seized them” is named in this model “antagonistic inclusion”.³¹ On the other side, the dominated group may keep its ability to preserve its own religious sites and/or to create new ones in a display of peripherality, also sanctioned by the dominant power.

While our own documentation is much more limited, the proximity between our research interest and those of Hayden’s convinced us that our reflections would benefit from an interdisciplinary approach, allowing us to build bridges between the “multiple small academic communities” described by Clifford Geertz.³² Since we were exploring the notion of religious competition during Late Antiquity, we wished to include its spatial dimension; using Hayden’s concept of “competitive sharing” seemed like the most appropriate way to begin our inquiry. Hayden was gracious enough to accept our invitation to give an online lecture during the preparation of the Shared Religious Sites workshop, held at the University of Fribourg on June 21st, 2021.³³ This volume includes the paper version of his lecture, providing the collective work of historians, philologists, and archaeologists with an anthropological horizon.

3. Content and organization of the volume

Studies on today’s shared religious sites are often mainly based on observation and interviews, with photographic and video evidence. They contain very detailed and specific documentation about the sites, their architectural layout, and their attendance, as well as their chronological evolution, at least in recent times. Debates consequently arose on the social meaning of sharing and the interper-

29 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 28.

30 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 35–38.

31 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 131.

32 Geertz 1982 cited by Hayden in this volume, p. 215.

33 R.M. Hayden’s lecture, entitled *Antagonistic Tolerance in the Late Antique Eastern Empire as Viewed from Rumelia*, was delivered online on March 8th, 2021; see the abstract at <https://relab.hypotheses.org/lecture-series>.

sonal relationships between visitors of different religious affiliations. Currently, while anthropologists still use the adjective “shared” to designate such sites, they prefer to describe the type of social behavior exhibited there as “mixing”, since the usual meaning of “sharing” can imply amicability.³⁴ Ancient sources do not supply us with enough information about the social consequence of people of different religions meeting each other at the same religious site in Late Antiquity. While we chose to use the verb “to share”, we do not mean to make any generalization about the social nature of said sharing. We will consider seemingly confrontational cases as well as apparently peaceful ones.

To facilitate the comparison and identification of trends of spatial occupancy, we have decided to focus on a limited geographical area as well as on a specific chronological period: the Eastern Roman provinces from the 4th century onward, a turning point in the Empire’s religious transformations.³⁵ This decision to limit our research to the eastern part of the Empire does not stem from a perceived specificity of this geographical area in comparison with its western counterpart. It is simply dictated by the available evidence, which is much more extensive about the east.

In the first chapter, “Sharing Religious Sites in Late Antique Roman Empire: Definition, Dynamics, Tentative Inventory”, we lay out the methodological grounds for the study of shared religious sites in the Late Antique Eastern Roman Empire. This chapter discusses the terminology, distinguishes between different types of occupancy dynamics that have been traditionally grouped together under the umbrella term “sharing”, and proposes a tentative inventory of shared religious sites.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on Late Antique legal sources dealing with spatial sharing and non-sharing. In her “‘Law as a Weapon’. The Status of Temples, Churches, and Synagogues and the Legal Mechanisms for Their Confiscation and Reallocation to Catholic Churches (4th–5th c.)”, Capucine Nemo-Pekelman clarifies the diverse legal status of religious buildings serving different communities in imperial law, the criteria for confiscating those belonging to Jews, pagans, and Christian deemed heretics, as well as the process that Catholics needed to follow if they wanted to take control over them. Manté Lenkaitytė Osterman then focuses on ecclesiastical law in “The (Non)Sharing of Religious Sites in the Greek Canonical Sources of the 4th Century”. She shows that Greek councils’ canons only mentioned spatial sharing to prohibit it.

Chapter 4 and 5 study some historical religious sites and wonder if their occupancy qualifies as sharing. In his “Competitive Sharing in Late Antique Asia Minor: Religious Sites or a Different Arena?”, Peter Talloen analyzes attendance at pagan sanctuaries as well as the various religious markers found in public

34 See Bowman 2010.

35 See our chapter 1 in this volume.

space. In “Sharing Monasteries: Mapping Late Antique Religious Competition at Alexandria”, Maria Chiara Giorda focuses on intra-confessional sharing between competing Christian denominations, namely Chalcedonians and Monophysites, in Egypt. She describes a complex ballet of coexistence and confrontation, depending on specific sites and on circumstances.

In chapter 6, Katharina Heyden (“Hierapolis/Mabbug in Late Antiquity. A Place of Competitive Veneration and Co-Production between Atargatis, the Syrian Mother Goddess, and Mary, the Mother of God?”) shows that polemical discourse could make use of famous sites where actual sharing was not documented, thus creating fictional shared religious sites on historical locations. Following this trend, in chapter 7, entitled “‘Heretical Places’ in Ancient Heresiology. Two Cases of ‘Competitive Sharing’ in the *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis?”, Gaetano Spampinato explores how heresiology located sharing in unknown sites. Epiphanius made up completely fictionalized shared religious sites to discredit competing Christian groups by accusing them of worshipping with pagans or other heretics.

Nicole Belayche (Chapter 8) concludes this overview by analyzing each case study against the background of the historiographical debate about religions during the Late Roman Empire.

Since we opened with Robert Hayden’s model of Antagonistic Tolerance, we asked him to provide us with a *longue durée* anthropological viewpoint. In his “Antagonistic Tolerance in the Late Antique Eastern Empire: The View from Rumelia”, he explains his theoretical framework and focuses on the evolution and attendance of the temple of Augustus and Rome in Ankara through the ages (Chapter 9).

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Sharing Religious Sites in the Late Antique Roman Empire

Definition, Dynamics, Tentative Inventory

Maureen Attali and Francesco Massa

1. Time, space, evidence

In his oration addressed to Emperor Jovian on January 1st, 364 as spokesman of the Senate, the philosopher Themistius praises the “harmonious union of many voices” (*symphonia*) and the “diversity” (*poikilia*) characterizing the territories of the Roman Empire of the 4th century. The diversity is illustrated by the multitude of ritual practices which, according to Themistius, result from the various ancestral traditions of each of the Empire’s peoples. Therefore, in his speech to Jovian, Themistius exhorts the emperor not to limit the variety of ways that lead to the supreme deity but to encourage them. As groups with different functions coexist within the army and within society, so do the ways of life and local traditions about religious practices.¹

The speech of Themistius offers the picture of an empire which, still in the second half of 4th century, was highly multi-cultural and multi-religious. Crossed as it was by multiple processes of interaction, it represented a globalized and interconnected space, in which local realities established links with the broader Graeco-Roman *koine*. The topic of this book, shared religious sites, is situated precisely in this political and cultural context. The main objective is to understand if and how religious sites of the Eastern Roman Empire were the object of a shared attendance by groups or individuals from different religious backgrounds. This sharing may occur both when individuals with different identities go to the same religious site to perform ritual practices and when different religious buildings are located together at the same site. As we shall explain later, we consider that sharing can also occur where markers belonging to different religious groups are present at the same place.

Christian sources dealing with spatial competition often give the impression that Christians made for most of the inhabitants, with pagans painted as an ob-

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¹ Themistius, *Oration* 5.8 (69a–70a). On this text, see Massa 2022. For an English translation, see Heather, Moncur 2001, 149–173.

solete minority over which Christians systematically triumphed. Indeed, as Robert Hayden has shown in his works on the competitive sharing of religious sites, the interaction between religious groups is often marked by “dominance and subordination, or contestation over dominance”.² Thus, dominance becomes a key-factor in the analysis of the spatial occupation by religious groups at a given time. The problem of dominance is a major focus of our survey, which begins at a pivotal moment in the history of the Empire, the 4th century. At this time, the balance of power between pagans and Christians began to tip and the Christian authorities were getting increasingly important in the public sphere. However, Christian conversion of imperial elites was a long-term process. Christianity was far from homogeneous during Late Antiquity: various Christian groups, mainly defined on the basis of doctrinal divergences, were sometimes keener on opposing each other than on fighting pagans or Jews.³ Thus, throughout the 4th century, power positions depended on the emperors’ own religious alignment and ensuing support (between Nicaeans, Arians, pagans, etc.).

Moreover, a consensus has emerged in most recent scholarship, according to which the reign of Constantine did not produce a real and immediate revolution in the religious panorama of the time and that spatial Christianization was neither a linear nor a homogeneous process.⁴ As several studies have shown, Constantine’s policy was on many subjects in continuity with the previous tradition.⁵ If there was a Constantinian turning point, it was mainly in the texts of Christian authors who retrospectively tried to represent the Constantinian years as a moment of radical change in the history of the churches and Christianity.⁶ In so doing, these authors were thinking about the religious identities of the inhabitants of the Empire and were trying to draw rigid boundaries between different groups.⁷ It is only in this process of creation of a religious identity and of differentiation from the “others” that Christians became interested in the problem of “sharing” in the spaces of the ancient city. These Christian questions gave

2 On the “Antagonistic Tolerance model”, see Hayden *et al.* 2016. See also our Preface (with bibliography) and the chapter by Robert M. Hayden at the end of this volume.

3 See the chapter by Maria Chiara Giorda in this volume.

4 Christianization in Late Antiquity is a fluid concept: see Inglebert, Destephen, Dumézil 2010; Leppin 2012; Watts 2015.

5 See, for instance, MacMullen 1986, and Barnes 2009.

6 On this new Christian discourse, see Schott 2008 and Colot 2016.

7 Among the vast bibliography on religious identities, see, e.g., Frakes, DePalma Digeser 2006; Belayche, Mimouni 2009; Flower, Ludlow 2020. The typology of religions which draws distinctions between pagans, Christians, and Jews, far from being self-evident, was mostly elaborated by Christians authors who, in their polemical writings, attempted to set themselves apart from those they considered as “others”: see Massa 2017a.

the sharing of religious sites, which was usual in Antiquity (as in the case of funeral spaces), a new visibility and a new meaning.⁸

The new Christian rhetoric around the figure of Constantine is associated with the beginning of the process of topographic transformation involving the cities of the Empire. As we know, when power relations change, the “spatial bases” are readjusted, as the geographer and anthropologist David Harvey reminds us.⁹ From the Constantinian period onwards, Christian cult buildings (churches, shrines, etc.) are erected by modifying the religious landscape of the Empire. Moreover, from the 4th century, the control of civic space became a fundamental issue for the Christian authorities. This process, sometimes called “Christianization” of space,¹⁰ is documented both in the main cities and in less urbanized areas. This control of space occurs in different ways, not only on the material but also on the discursive level.¹¹

In terms of spatialization, the 4th-century innovation is not so much the construction of Christian buildings, but the appearance of a Christian architectural identity. Nothing allowed the so-called “Christian house” in Dura Europos, for example, to be identified from the outside.¹² In Nicomedia, according to Lactantius, during the so-called “Great Persecution”, one could see the church of the city from the imperial palace of Diocletian because the Christian building was located “on rising ground”.¹³ However, we do not know whether this building showed any visible Christian decoration from the outside. Even after Constantine, we know almost nothing about the reasons that led to the construction of a church in a specific place in the city. This decision could have been related to the donation made to build the church (as in Rome); or to the imperial decision (as in Antioch); or may simply have been dictated by the availability of a suitable area.

The chronological boundaries of our research take into account this double historical dimension, both rhetorical and spatial, which emerged during the 4th century. The order of the contributions gathered in this volume is then deter-

8 On funeral spaces, see Rebillard 2003.

9 Harvey 1989, 238: “any struggle to reconstitute power relations is a struggle to reorganize their spatial bases”.

10 See, for instance, Caseau 2001, and Busine 2015, 7.

11 As pointed out by Lätzer-Lasar, Raja, Rüpke, Urciuoli 2020, 3, it is important to understand “how religion [is] used by different agents to appropriate (and that is to say, also craft) urban space”.

12 Sessa 2009, and Sotinel 2005.

13 Lactantius, *On the Death of Persecutors* 12.3: “That church, situated on rising ground, was within view of the palace; and Diocletian and Galerius stood, as if on a watchtower, disputing long whether it ought to be set on fire” (*Ipsi vero in speculis – in alto enim constituta ecclesia ex palatio videbatur – diu inter se concertabant, utrum ignem potius supponi oporteret*). Transl. by A. Bowen and P. Garnsey.

mined by the chronology of sources that document sharing in this new way. The various chapters exclusively focus on the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.¹⁴ This geographical choice does not aim at highlighting a kind of Eastern “specificity” or “uniqueness” in the dynamics of shared religious sites, nor to underline more generally a division between East and West. For our research question, sources documenting what was taking place in the East are simply more abundant; consequently, scholarship has predominately dealt with the Eastern provinces. Limiting this inquiry to the Eastern provinces also enables us to analyze a more homogeneous geographical context and to establish connections between similar local contexts.

In order to discuss the sharing dynamics in religious sites, this book bases itself on the available evidence gathered from various types of sources: literary texts, legal texts, acts of canonical councils, and material culture. This diversity of sources ensures that our point of view on the sharing of religious sites will not be merely the vision of a single group or authority. It will also enable us to go beyond the normative and ideological discourses that understand religious space as simply mirroring a corresponding religious community. Nevertheless, we should remain aware of the dominant position of Christian sources (and especially textual sources), not only in the society of the 4th to 5th centuries but also in modern scholarship. In general, as several studies in this volume will show, Christian literature denies the existence of any form of sharing and normative sources prohibit it. The sources do not present the dynamics of sharing in the same way. Thus, our analysis is influenced by the type of evidence that documents the phenomenon. Depending on whether one uses legal or literary texts, inscriptions or material evidence, a different aspect of sharing can be emphasized. Very often, the literary sources, and in particular the Christian authors, interpret the diversity of ritual practices as markers of different religious identities. It is therefore these sources that point to the existence of a sharing situation.

This methodological introduction will unfold as follows. The first section will offer definitions for our operative concepts, especially the categories of “religious sites” and consecutively, of “shared religious sites” (§ 2). The second section will question the various sharing dynamics hitherto discussed in modern scholarship: we will distinguish the successive occupation of the same site at different periods, which we consider to be non-sharing (§ 3), from the simultaneous active sharing on which this volume will focus (§ 4). The third section will address the topic – unfortunately only sparsely documented – of the types of practices and rituals which were performed inside these Late Antique sites (§ 5). Finally, we will propose a tentative recapitulative table inventorying all identified shared religious sites of the Eastern Roman Empire (4th to 6th centuries) (§ 6).

14 I.e., following the Late Ancient terminology, provinces included in the following dioceses: Egypt, East, Asia, Pontus, Thrace, Macedonia and Dacia as well as the province of Achaëa.

2. A matter of definition: operative categories

It will be useful, at the outset of this volume, to clarify the terminological choices that have been made and proposed to contributors. As mentioned in the preface, the present research was born of the diffusion of the model of “shared holy places” that has predominated in scholarship in the last twenty years. It is not simple to use a specific terminology for processes that cannot always be analyzed in detail in the sources. This first section will therefore define the two concepts that guided our research: “religious sites” and “shared religious sites”.

2.1. Religious sites

First of all, the significant concept of “site” will require a precise definition, especially regarding its scale. To label the locations at the center of the dynamics of sharing, several choices could have been made; scholarly publications often use the words “space” and/or “place”. As for Antiquity, the Greek and Latin languages cannot provide us with a period-specific terminology because they did not have a notion to define space in general.¹⁵

While it is certain that none of the available words simply designate an objective reality,¹⁶ it seemed to us that “site” would be the most accurate denomination to designate a space delimited by borders that circumscribe where the sharing took place.¹⁷ Within this enclosed space, several religious buildings may exist, and these buildings may be the expression of different and competing religious groups within the city. This does not mean, however, that each site is always a space with clearly established boundaries. It is not always possible to identify the physical, topographical, or geographical boundaries of religious sites. The ancient sources sometimes modify their discourse about the sites’ boundaries so as to adapt them to their normative or polemical objectives. As we shall see, the sites that are at the heart of this volume are simultaneously material, immaterial, and idealized spaces.¹⁸

On the basis of these considerations, we propose to use the phrase “religious sites” instead of “sacred/holy places” or “sacred/holy spaces”.¹⁹ In a “reli-

15 See Rudhardt 2001, 11: the Greeks “parlent d’emplacements, de lieux, de contrées ou de régions (τόπος, χώρα, χωρίον, χώρος), soit toujours d’une étendue concrète et matérielle, non d’une forme, d’un cadre indépendant de son contenu”.

16 See, for instance, Urciuoli 2021, 32.

17 We refer to the use of “site” in the work of R.M. Hayden: see, for instance, Hayden 2022.

18 We use here the definition by Lévy, Lussault 2013, 353. See also Lévi 2014.

19 For “sacred places”, see Day, Hakola, Kahlos, Tervahauta 2016. For “sacred spaces”, see Lafond, Michel 2016 with the conclusions by Belayche 2016. Caseau 1999 uses the expression “sacred landscapes”. More generally, on the “sacred space” between “paganism” and “Chris-

gious site”, we can find several religious buildings that do not always have the same legal status.²⁰ It is true that, in the Roman Empire, a *locum sacrum* is defined by a legal process. This means that it has been consecrated by the Senate *ex auctoritate populi Romani* and it is the property of the deities.²¹ However, this legal definition does not fit well with the analysis of religious places in Late Antiquity. First, it only concerns Roman law, and consequently the civic religion of the *populus Romanus*; second, the legal process may have been different depending on the legal status of the Empire’s various cities.²² Moreover, this definition does not include either synagogues and/or churches or rituals celebrated in public spaces. Our proposed analysis will consider locations that were not “sacred” in the theological and legal sense.

The expression “religious sites”, on the other hand, has the advantage of using an etic definition based on the users’ point of view. The expression “religious sites” refers either to places hosting rituals or to places where one or more religious identities are displayed and/or claimed. As we shall demonstrate, such an identity can be expressed through religious objects, images with explicit religious references, or possibly by identity markers on the building. We know in fact that the control of space can be displayed by adding new markers, such as crosses etched on walls, or installation of new elements. Therefore, the expression “religious sites” potentially encompasses all spaces in the city, whether public or private. Of course, this is only an operative category, proposed here in order to facilitate the exploration of the Late Antique documentation. The ancient city, when restricted to its urban center, can be regarded as a shared religious space since it hosted a plurality of cults, with virtually all its inhabitants taking part in diverse cultic activities. Some rituals were carried out at a municipal or even provincial level, paid for with public funds, and involved officials; most of the cities’ inhabitants either took an active part in the ceremonies or witnessed them, as they took place in the open.²³ Other rituals were performed by specific groups – communities, families, associations – or individuals at various locations: sanctuaries, gardens, fields, but also circuses, theaters, amphitheaters, hippodromes as well as in baths, streets, and squares, especially the ago-

tianity”, see Saggiaro 2014. The words “sacred” and “holy” do not take into account the plurality of situations in Antiquity. On the terminology used in the anthropological studies, see our Preface in this volume.

20 In Late Antiquity, it is not always easy to determine the legal status of the buildings and who had the authority over the religious sites, whether they were shared or not. On this topic, see the chapters of C. Nemo-Pekelman and M. Lenkaitytė Ostermann in this volume.

21 Gaius, *Institutes* 2.5: *Sed sacrum quidem hoc solum existimatur quod ex auctoritate populi Romani consecratum est, veluti lege de ea re lata aut senatusconsulto facto.*

22 See Scheid 1997 and 2010.

23 Chaniotis 1997.

ra.²⁴ As such, any place located within the city space, whether public or private, was a potential religious space and was not necessarily limited to one cult. Those potentially shared locations were not restricted to the urban center: cemeteries, for example, were always located outside the city gates.

Finally, even if our analysis starts from real sites, we must not forget that “religious sites” can also be “fictionalized”.²⁵ By this we mean imagined spaces that are not historically documented, but which are created from some concrete elements for polemical purposes. As we shall see, these “fictionalized sites” illustrate the need of Christian authors to condemn the sharing dynamics attested in the territories of the Roman Empire.

2.2. Shared religious sites

When using the expression “shared religious sites”, we mean specific locations where religious acts were performed during the same time-period by individuals or groups who considered themselves as devotees of different “religions”, with the meaning Christian authors gave this word during Late Antiquity.²⁶ Among said individuals, we would find Jews who may have regarded themselves as belonging to different communities, Christians of various competing denominations as well as adherents of the traditional cults of the Empire.²⁷ In some cases, visitors commended themselves to the same entities, but divine addressees were sometimes also sharing a site. In addition, we define the performance of a religious act in the broadest possible terms. Far from limiting it to the institutional cults which required either a sacrifice, the Eucharist or a liturgical Torah reading, we include any practice that can be interpreted as either a ritual or as an expression of religious identity, such as inscriptions and drawings. In some cases, even though we do not know if visitors actually performed an act when they found themselves inside the religious site, we know they visited it for religious reasons, since they wrote about it: such was the case of Christian pilgrims who

24 For public baths, see Belayche 2017. On Jewish rituals in the agora and in theaters, see John Chrysostom, *Against Judaizing Christians (Adversus Iudaeos)* 1.2.4 (PG 48.846–849); Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *The Questions on Octateuch: Leviticus (Quaestiones in Leviticus)* 32 (PG 80.341b); Socrates of Constantinople, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.13.4. Generally, see Belayche 2007, and Lepelley 2011.

25 See the chapter by Katharina Heyden in this volume.

26 Smith 2004; Nongbri 2013; Barton, Boyarin 2016; Massa 2017b.

27 Indeed, as recent studies have shown, religious identities were mostly constructed during Late Antiquity, with the definitions decided by those who claimed religious authority not always coinciding with self-definitions: see for instance, Belayche, Mimouni 2009.

were interested in contemporaneous Jewish synagogues because they thought them connected with the life and ministry of Jesus.²⁸

Thus, we chose to include in our survey the descriptions of ancient authors who understood buildings serving different religious communities as belonging to the same site. We will also include religious buildings which were in function at the same time and were built so close to each other that, to archaeologists, they may be considered as part of the same site. We also take into account literary mentions of sites that may not have had any historical existence but that may have been created for purely polemical purposes. Indeed, several Christian authors did use shared sites as illustrations of what they denounced as a heavily reproachable counter-model of relations between the various religions of the empire. Those “fictionalized sites” had a rhetorical function as they were used as discursive devices to accuse competing groups of betraying the ideal of the good Christian. As we shall see with Epiphanius of Salamis, it did not matter whether the sharing was real or invented by the heresiologist. Its description served to draw identity borders where they were blurred.²⁹

Since they are normative sources, legal texts only ever refer to sharing situations with the aim of suppressing them. Councils’ canons prohibit people that they consider to be true Christians to visit places belonging to those they brand as heretics, including churches, tombs and *martyria*, but also houses where rituals could also be performed.³⁰ Imperial laws drew up the criteria required for seizing religious buildings and reallocating them to individuals or institutions from another religion.³¹ Conversely, Rabbinic legislation, while aspiring to normativity, did permit Jews to visit gardens belonging to pagan temples, probably to hold gatherings there, if they did not show any reverence for the idols.³² However, it is usually non-normative literary sources (homilies, polemical texts, pilgrimage accounts, topographies, ecclesiastical histories ...), as well as inscriptions and archeology, that document the practice of sharing religious sites.

When visiting Carrhae (*Osrhoene*), the Christian pilgrim Egeria described a church erected on “the house of saint Abraham” (*domus sancti Abrahae*), where a Christian martyr named Helpidius was also buried. She then drew a comparison between the Christians’ “reverence for the place where Abraham’s house was originally located” (*reverentia locum illum ubi primitus domus sancti Abrahae fuit*) and the pagans’ (*gentes*) own reverence for another location in Carrhae’s territory, the place of Nahor and Bethuel’s tombs (*locum ubi sunt memo-*

28 Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerary* 5 (ed. Milani 1977).

29 See the chapter by Gaetano Spampinato in this volume.

30 See the chapter by Manté Lenkaitytė Ostermann in this volume.

31 See the chapter by Capucine Nemo-Pekelman in this volume.

32 Mishna *Avodah Zarah* 4.3. See Vana 1997.

riae Naor et Bathuhelis)”.³³ According to the *Book of Genesis* (11:27; 22:23), Nahor and Bethuel were Abraham’s brother and nephew; Bethuel was also Rebecca’s father. Egeria’s testimony on this is not corroborated by any other source and scholars believe her statement to be an *interpretatio Christiana* of the local cult of Sin, the patron god of Ur, where Abraham was said to be from. Indeed, the cult of Sin in Carrhae is well attested during Late Antiquity: the Roman emperor Julian sacrificed there in 363 and bishop Jacob of Sarug still denounced it in the 6th century.³⁴ However, more than the cultic reality behind Egeria’s words, what is interesting is that she is projecting a contemporary religious identity divide onto the Biblical text: since Nahor and Bethuel were not part of God’s covenant with Abraham, Egeria found them to be the perfect Biblical addressees for pagans in her own time. Historicity is not the main focus of our pilgrim’s account. When confronted with a pagan inhabited city, Egeria opted to define Carrhae’s territory as one single religious site, shared by both Christians and pagans, albeit at different locations. By stating that local pagans were worshiping members of Abraham’s family, she instrumentalized pagan beliefs as proof of the city’s holiness. In Egeria’s own theology, religious diversity is not a risk, but an additional proof of a site’s religious significance. The more people consider a site holy, the holier it gets.

This discursive strategy was sometimes also used by Christian authorities. In his *Onomasticon* (ca. 325), Eusebius of Caesarea wrote that in the territory of Hebron, pagans (*ethnê*) worshiped the terebinth-tree under which Abraham had given hospitality to the angels (*angeli*).³⁵ Playing on a linguistic ambiguity on the species of the tree in the Biblical narrative, the bishop distinguished between this pagan worshiped terebinth and “Abraham’s oak” (*drys Abraham*) so as not to suggest that Christian pilgrims visiting the site could be participating in idolatry. Those two different trees are mentioned in relation with the toponym “Mamre” on a 6th-century mosaic map of the Christian holy land known as the Madaba Map.³⁶ While suppressing any spatial sharing, Eusebius, like Egeria, instrumentalized pagan rituals as proof of the site’s holiness.³⁷

In their discourse, both the bishop and the pilgrim drew an opposition between the Christians – “us” according to Egeria – and the “pagan” others. Their claim to sharing – or non-sharing – mainly rests upon the ascription and naming of various religious groups. In other descriptions of shared religious sites,

33 Egeria, *Journal* 20.8 (trad. Wilkinson 1971).

34 Ammianus Marcellinus 23.3.2; Jacob of Sarug, *On the Fall of the Idols* 11.51–54.

35 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Onomasticon*, s.v. “Arbô”, 3v (ed. Klostermann 1904, 6).

36 Avi-Yonah 1954, 67.

37 When translating Eusebius’s work into Latin in 388 (ed. Klostermann 1904, 7), Jerome also distinguished between the oak located in Mamre and the terebinth, which he called an object of pagan superstition (*superstitio*).

this classification is clarified by the identification of each group's divine addressee(s). In Sozomen's 5th-century account of the Mamre festival, the Christian historian specified that each community attended the site for different reasons, i.e., to worship different figures who had manifested themselves there: Abraham for the Jews, the *angeloi* for the pagans (*Hellenes*), and Christ for the Christians.³⁸ Since Sozomen wished to portray this specific instance of sharing in a positive light, he only mentioned addressees found in the Bible, like Egeria did by stating that pagans worshiped Nahor and Bethuel. However, since pagan cults of divine beings called *angeloi* are attested during Late Antiquity, Sozomen's description, while still being heavily Christianized, probably records a historical case of actual physical sharing of the same site.

The focus on shared religious sites follows on from a rather recent trend in scholarship regarding the evolution of religious communities during Late Antiquity. The traditional view depended a lot on often later Christian literature, which led scholars to interpret Constantine's reign as a major-turning point, a true revolution. From this point onwards, it was said that the vast majority of the Empire's inhabitants has swiftly and willingly adopted the new religion, which was fulfilling every spiritual yearning that the traditional cults could not. Temples were quickly destroyed and immediately turned into churches by enthusiastic Christians. A law by Theodosius II and Valentinian III, who, in 435, ordered city magistrates to either destroy pagan sanctuaries or mark them with crosses, was understood as a clear expression of what was interpreted as a general and steady imperial policy originally implemented by Constantine and his successors, who were all Christians themselves except for Julian and his brief 18-month reign in 361 to 363.³⁹ By the end of the 4th century, the pagan cult was considered to be nearly completely suppressed, as evidenced by Theodosius's ban on bloody sacrifices.⁴⁰ While not forbidden, the Jewish religion has been affected too, with many synagogues also seized and turned into churches.

Since the 2000s, the idea that Christians had become the majority religion in the Empire from as early as the first half of the 4th century, with pagans only "surviving" for a short time before their unavoidable disappearance, has been decisively called into question.⁴¹ The ways in which Christians coexisted and interacted with those they considered as "others" has attracted considerably scholarly interest. In spite of spectacular proclamations of hostility and violence, no documented conflict is found in multiple places. Critical readings of laws collected in the *Theodosian Code* have pointed out that imperial decisions were often

38 Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.4.3.

39 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.25.

40 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.11 (June 391), 16.10.12 (November 392) and 16.10.13 (August 395).

41 See, for instance, Lizzi Testa 2009; McLynn 2009; Lavan, Mulryan 2011.

originally taken in response to a specific situation and were not universally implemented, especially since their implementation rested on the will of local authorities. Even the 435-law ordering pagan sanctuaries to be marked by the sign of the cross has been reinterpreted by considering the pagan viewpoint. While this practice was regarded as a purifying ritual by Christians, the opposite was certainly not true: nothing indicates that such marking was enough for pagans to desert a site.

Similarly, critical reading of the ideological invective and sometimes wishful thinking of Christian authors nuanced the real status of the Jews and their religious sites under Christian authorities, underlining the sometimes-limited scope and impact of imperial laws. Scholars have noted that despite legal restrictions on the building of synagogues and calls to destruction and exclusion of these buildings from enthusiastic Christian theologians, they functioned alongside churches for a long time in some areas.⁴² Indeed, contrary to what has often been taken for granted by historians, ecclesiastical authorities had no legal power over synagogues. As such, Christian pilgrims who wished to enter synagogues could only do so with the permission of the local Jewish communities.⁴³ The only Jewish site whose access may have been temporarily restricted by imperial authorities was the location of the former Temple in Jerusalem, or “Temple Mount” in Rabbinic literature.⁴⁴

As is the case in anthropological studies, the field of Late Antiquity is currently torn between scholars who consider that the few documented cases of inter-religious violence are representative of the general atmosphere of the period, and those who argue for a mainly peaceful cohabitation with pagans. This last stance is for instance exemplified by Michael Mulryan’s description of the Latin West as a “conciliatory and harmonious topography that saw pagan and Christian buildings working peacefully alongside each other”.⁴⁵ This argument derives from the absence of mentions of explicit conflict within the available source material. It thus stems from the general idea one wishes to convey about the period and ties in with attempts at defining Late Antiquity as a peaceful transitional period.⁴⁶

Since the paucity of sources does not support any generalizing statements, we did not wish to impose a specific historiographical model to this volume’s

42 Stemberger 1998.

43 Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerary 5* (Nazareth); John Chrysostom, *Against Judaizing Christians* 1.8.1 (Antioch).

44 The main source documenting a restricted access is Jerome, *Commentary on Zephaniah* 1.15–16. See Cotton 2010, 23–25, and Attali 2023.

45 Mulryan 2001, 209.

46 A first criticism of the optimistic and peaceful model of the Late Antiquity centuries was formulated by Giardina 1999. A response to this criticism can be found in Cameron 2002.

contributors. Depending on the available documentation on each specific site, the diverse case studies included in this collective work can align themselves with various interpretative models.

3. Diachronic occupation of religious sites: cases of non-sharing

Now that the terminological and conceptual grounds of our investigation have been established, it is time to move on to the analysis of the dynamics at play in the religious sites of the Late Antique Roman East. This volume aims at analyzing occurrences of “active sharing”, namely specific documented cases of active simultaneous sharing.

Anthropological studies have sometimes considered the successive occupation of a building or site by different religious groups or its reuse as relating to a dynamic of sharing, as with the so-called “temple conversion”. This phrase refers to the process of occupation of traditional religious buildings by imperial and/or Christian ecclesiastical authorities and their transformation into Christian churches or places of worship.⁴⁷ However, when a religious building ended up being given over to a different religious group, it was usually because it had previously been abandoned, and its former cult or worship transferred somewhere else (as with the Alexandrian *mithraeum* given over to the Christians in 361).⁴⁸ As far as we know, this was the most common situation in Antiquity.⁴⁹ Indeed, if we disregard the instances of local retaliation after a specific incident, imperial legislation only sanctioned the appropriation of abandoned synagogues and temples.⁵⁰ The few famous violent outbursts regarding ownership of a religious

47 Although the notion of “conversion” is often used in scholarship, especially in the case of temples (and occasionally synagogues) being “converted” into churches, to describe the adaptation and reuse of religious buildings (see Bayliss 2004), we would rather not apply to Late Antiquity a historiographical notion based on Christian theology. On “temple conversion” as a metaphor for people’s conversion in Late Antique Christian discourses, see Sotinel 2018.

48 Socrates of Constantinople, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.2.

49 Foschia 2000; Caseau 2004; Lavan 2011; Deligiannakis 2019.

50 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.16 permits the destruction of rural temples if it can be done without causing an uproar and *Theodosian Code* 16.8.22 orders the destruction of synagogues *in solitudine*. On the contrary, see *Justinian Code* 1.5.17 (ca. 528, ed. Krueger 1989, 56) which orders the destruction of Samaritan synagogues after revolts and Justinian, *Novels* 37 (August 535, ed. Schoel, Kroll 1988, 244–245) ordering the transformation of the cult buildings of Jews, pagans, and heretics into churches (*ad ecclesiarum figuram eas volumes reformari*) after he reconquered North Africa over the Vandals. See Nemo-Pekelman 2014 and her chapter in this volume.

building result from a specific context and local power struggle, as was the case for the Alexandrian Serapeum in 392.⁵¹

Moreover, recent studies have shown how deliberate destruction of active temples and synagogues by Christian authorities and their subsequent transformation or rebuilding as churches were considerably less common than some Christian authors would have us believe.⁵² When a church ended up on the same location as a temple, it was usually after a considerable chronological hiatus, as in Caesarea Maritima (*Palaestina* I).⁵³ Even the destruction of the Aphrodite temple on Golgotha in Jerusalem, attributed to the emperor Constantine and lengthily recounted by Eusebius of Caesarea, must be recontextualized. The city Capitol, to which was probably associated a temple of Tyche-Aphrodite, may have lost its importance after the 10th Legion Fretensis, which accounted for most of the pagan inhabitants of the Roman colony of Aelia Capitolina, was relocated in Abila (nowadays Eilat/Aqaba) at the very end of the 3rd century, following Diocletian's reforms.⁵⁴ It should not be forgotten that the abandonment of sanctuaries is not an exclusive phenomenon of Late Antiquity: sanctuaries were sometimes deserted already from the Archaic period onwards,⁵⁵ a new wave of abandonment also took place during the 3rd century CE for non-religious but circumstance reasons.⁵⁶

In terms of discourses, from the end of the 4th century we see a change in Christian rhetoric.⁵⁷ From this point onwards, the narrative of Christianization is increasingly connected with the conquest of time and space. For instance, in 379, the *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus* by Gregory of Nyssa shows that the evangelization of Neocaesarea (in *Pontus*) must include both the destruction of pagan temples and the construction of churches.⁵⁸ In the same way, around 390, according to Jerome, during Hilarion's trip to Arabia, the Saracens asked the monk to draw "the outline of a church" and to sign "their priest with the sign of Christ".⁵⁹ In Jerome's representation, Hilarion arrives in a pagan land where

51 Hahn 2008. On the "pattern of a conflictual end of temples", see the conclusions by Nicole Belayche at the end of this volume.

52 Hanson 1978; Jones 2014; Lanfranchi 2014.

53 Stabler *et al.* 2008, 21.

54 Belayche 2018.

55 Palamidis 2018.

56 Lavan 2011.

57 See Markus 1990, and Cameron 1991.

58 See MacDougall 2016.

59 Jerome, *Life of Hilarion* 25: "By the marvelous grace of God they did not allow him to depart before he had drawn the outline of a church, and their priest with his garland upon his head had been signed with the sign of Christ" (*Mira Domini gratia: non prius eum abire passi sunt quam futurae ecclesiae limitem mitteret, et sacerdos eorum, ut erat coronatus, Christi signo denotaretur*). Transl. by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley.

people honored Venus; when he leaves the country, however, he has transformed the land and the body of the Christian priest. At the beginning of the 5th century, in a letter addressed to Laeta, daughter of the pagan Albinus, the same Jerome gives the image of Rome as a city where the Capitol is dingy, and the temples are covered “with soot and cobwebs”: “the city is stirred to its depths and the people pour past their half-ruined shrines to visit the tombs of the martyrs”.⁶⁰

Territory and body are marked by the Christian influence. Historiography often refers to the celebration of “purification rites” by Christians, but unfortunately, we know little about the real practices associated with this Christian transformation of space.⁶¹ The few inscriptions that locate a church where a pagan cult place previously stood do not mention any specific rituals of spatial purification, only destruction. Two 6th-century inscriptions from Zorava (*Arabia*) only state that the former “house originally built for carved demons” (*domos prin glypton daimonôn etetukto*) has been “conquered” (*dedmemenos*) and “rebuilt” (*anegeiren*) as the house of the martyr Sergios or, for the church of St. George, that “the demons’ residence became (*gegonen*) the house of God”.⁶² As for purification rituals in legal sources, we only have the already-mentioned law from 435 by Theodosius II and Valentinian III who ordered city magistrates to “purify by the sign of the venerable Christian religion” (*venerandae christianae religionis signi expiari*) pagan sanctuaries (*fana, templa, delubra*); they probably meant the sanctuaries where sacrifices were still offered in spite of imperial prohibitions.⁶³ When such laws were enforced, the “purified” buildings were not all turned into churches; those which were do not qualify as shared religious sites according to our definition. As for artefacts, a number of crosses superimposed on older inscriptions and drawings or engraved on sculptures, as well as possibly voluntary mutilation of statues, have been interpreted as Christian attempts at neutralizing their power as well as proclamations of triumphant Christianity.⁶⁴ While this was probably true in many cases, the difficulty of interpreting such markings has recently been pointed out.⁶⁵

An interesting counterpart to Christian conceptions and practices regarding pagan artefacts can be found in Rabbinic legislation about Jewish ownership of “foreign cult object” (*avodah zarah*). According to the Mishna, compiled around

60 Jerome, *Letters* 107.1. Transl. by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley.

61 On depaganization, see Rothaus 1995; Hahn 2015, 118–119 and 123–124. See also Caseau 2001.

62 Sartre-Fauriat, Sartre 2014, n°177 and 186; see also <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E02065>; <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01754>. On this inscription, see the conclusions drawn by Nicole Belayche in this volume.

63 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.25.

64 See the chapter by Peter Talloen in this volume.

65 On the meaning of Christian cross markings, see Kristensen 2012.

200, Jews could own and display statues deemed pagan by rabbis if they met any of the following requirements: if the statues in question had never been cult statues; if one of their ear or digit was broken off; or, according to some rabbinic authorities, if they had previously been sold or pawned by a non-Jew.⁶⁶ Such statues were considered “nullified”, “emptied” (*batél*) of any religious significance. Therefore, ownership of pagan non-cultic statues – a category which encompassed most pagan artefacts – posed no religious problem to rabbis. In addition, according to them, there was no Jewish ritual that could possibly deprive an object of its inherent paganism: Jews could not nullify said statues by mutilating them themselves.⁶⁷ Indeed, in Jewish theology, paganism is defined as idolatry: thus, the permissibility of pagan statues for Jews solely depended on their status – cultic or non-cultic – according to pagans themselves, or, more accurately, to the rabbis’ own understanding of this status.⁶⁸

However, for our current investigation, Christian and Jewish considerations about architectural expressions of paganism are only relevant when potential nullifying or purifying marks were found *in situ*, i. e., inside religious sites which held simultaneous religious significance for both the “canceling” and the “cancelled” religious groups. We do not consider the inclusion of pagan *spolia* within churches or synagogues to be evidence for the sharing of a religious site if there is no indication that pagans actually visited such locations while considering them to be religiously significant for them.

On the contrary, when moving to pagan authors, we notice that even in the second half of the 4th century, these authors still completely ignore the Christian presence in the Roman world. This is the case not only of Libanius, in his *Oration in Praise of Antioch* around 356 to 360, but also of Ausonius, in 390, in his description of the major cities of the Roman Empire (*Ordo urbium nobilium*). Following a widespread rhetorical strategy, pagan authors refuse to admit the existence of religious competition in the Roman space. These pagan accounts remind that spatialization is not just an objective dynamic. Spatialization is also a matter of perception and representation. The ancient texts interpret this process in different ways, according to their purposes.

When a Christian author insists on replacing a temple with a church, it is appropriate to first understand the narrative strategy implied in his text. For example, the importance given to this destruction-rebuilding sequence in Eusebius’ narrative is linked to his literary attempt at creating a new Jerusalem which would supersede the Jewish one.⁶⁹ The historicity of other temples’ closures and

66 Mishna, *Avodah Zarah* 4.4–5.

67 Furstenberg 2010.

68 On the category of “cult-statues” and the debate on its relevance for the Roman world, see Stewart 2003.

69 Belayche 2018.

destructions attributed by Eusebius to Constantine has been questioned, since it is contradicted by archaeological finds and clash with Constantine's general policy as well as with the situation in Rome, where no such destruction was enforced.⁷⁰ Indeed, evicting a god remained a complex legal and ritual process (*exauguratio*) for which the authority of the *pontifex maximus* was not sufficient.⁷¹

4. Active sharing

Consequently, the timeframe appears to be a necessary criterion to define the act of sharing, whose meaning we limit to active simultaneous attendance or will to attend the same site for religious purposes. By simultaneous, we do not necessarily mean that people of different religious affiliations actually visited the same place at the same hour of the same day, but that they simultaneously considered it a relevant religious space for them.

4.1. Known cases of religious sites shared by pagans, Jews, and Christians

A few cases of religious sites shared by Jews, Christians, and pagans in Late Antiquity have been detected by researchers; some have previously been lengthily discussed. We have already mentioned them in this introduction but will briefly summarize the available documentation and current interpretations here. These examples show that the issue of spatial control is fundamental to the understanding of the dynamics of sharing, according to Hayden's model.⁷²

Mamre

A festival (*heorte, panegyris*) celebrated yearly in Mamre (*Palaestina I*) and attended by Jews, Christians, and pagans is described by the Christian historian Sozomen (ca. 445).⁷³ Since, according to Eusebius, Constantine had ordered that a basilica be constructed on this site precisely in order to prevent pagans from performing rituals there, and this church was already constructed by 333, scholars debate if Sozomen's account should be ascribed to his own lifetime or if he had used a pre-Constantinian source.⁷⁴ In any case, archaeological excavations have brought to light a number of religious buildings and artefacts on the site:

⁷⁰ Belayche 2005.

⁷¹ Glinister 2000, 66–67.

⁷² See the chapter by R.M. Hayden in this volume.

⁷³ Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.4.1–5. See Heyden 2020.

⁷⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine* 3.52–53; Bordeaux pilgrim, *Itinerary* 599.

the paved enclosure, erected during the 1st century BCE with massive stone blocks only used for Jewish cult buildings at the time, was partially altered during either the 2nd or the 3rd century CE. Statues of various divinities (Hermes, Dionysus) as well as sacrificial altars were discovered inside the precinct.⁷⁵ A basilical church was then built, but it seems to have originally only occupied a third of the walled space. Even though archaeology alone cannot determine if Jews, pagans, and Christians attended the site simultaneously or successively, the Christian accounts of pagan and Jewish rituals being performed there all throughout the 4th century, as well as rabbinic legislation regarding Jews visiting the “idoltrous [...] fair of the Terebinth” do also point to Mamre being a shared religious site.⁷⁶

Hammat-Gader

According to various literary sources, the minero-thermal baths of Emmatha in the territory of Gadara or Hammat-Gader (*Palaestina II*), famous for their curative properties, were visited by all regardless of their religious affiliation.⁷⁷ Both the bishop Epiphanius of Salamis in the 370s and a rabbinic tradition written down at the end of the 4th century describe inter-religious encounters happening there.⁷⁸ Inside the baths, around 60 Greek inscriptions were found: most of them record visitors’ names while defining the site as propitious and imbued with divine presence (*hagios topos*).⁷⁹ While a few inscriptions explicitly include Christian iconography and/or phrasing, most do not give any indication about their authors’ religious self-definition. Additionally, a large synagogue funded by foreign benefactors, and maybe also a basilical church were erected near the baths in the 5th or the 6th century. As Sozomen did regarding Mamre, Epiphanius specified that Jews and Christians met there because they attended an annual festival (*panegyris*); since the only time both authors used the word *panêgyris* in their works was in descriptions of the events at Mamre and Gadara, they may have voluntarily reserved this word for a shared festival at a shared religious site.

Daphne of Antioch

Between 378 and 397, while he resided in Antioch-on-the-Orontes (*Syria*) before being elected bishop of Constantinople, the Christian writer John Chrysos-

75 Mader 1957, 135–136 (vol. 1) and 137–139 (vol. 2).

76 Palestinian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 1.4; *Genesis Rabbah* 47.10.

77 Belayche 2016, and Nutzman 2017.

78 Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 30.7.5; Palestinian Talmud, *Qiddushin* 3.14.

79 Di Segni 1997. The adjective *hagios* was already used for space in Classical Greek. During Late Antiquity, it was also used to designate Jewish and Christian sites, most often synagogues and churches, as well as individuals.

tom criticized the suburb of Daphne because, according to him, it was a site shared between pagans, Christians, and Jews.⁸⁰ Daphne of Antioch was indeed famous throughout the empire for its oracular sanctuary of Apollo. In 351/352, the corpse of Babylas, a martyr who had died about a hundred years before, was transferred to Daphne and deposited inside a shrine (*martyrion*) probably erected by the road leading to the pagan sanctuary. When he sojourned in Antioch in 362/363, the pagan emperor Julian had Babylas's corpse removed from Daphne so that it would stop defiling the sanctuary's ground, hoping that it would enable the oracle to resume its then impeded activities.⁸¹ Some 15 years later, Chrysostom argued that even though the corpse of the martyr had left, his power (*dynamis*) remained in Daphne and had defeated Apollo's.⁸² However, reading Chrysostom's account makes it clear that, at the time of his writing, pagans were still performing rituals in the sanctuary while the nearby *martyrion* had been emptied. Sources do not allow us to establish the precise location of this Christian building.⁸³ Even if the *martyrion* was not located inside the *temenos*, Daphne was conceived as one site by both Julian and John. Christians no longer tolerated the presence of religious competitors within a site where they had managed to insert their own cult.⁸⁴ In addition, in two of his Antiochene homilies, Chrysostom tried to persuade his audience to stop visiting the synagogue of Matrona, also located in Daphne, arguing that doing so put their Christian identities and faith at risk.⁸⁵ Chrysostom's writings thus make Daphne's appear as a religious site shared by pagans, Jews, and Christians, a highly dangerous situation according to him.

Mount Carmel

The case of Mount Carmel (*Palaestina II*) is slightly more complex, since the sharing there is mainly documented by inscriptions that cannot be precisely dated. The mountain is first mentioned as a religious site associated with the cult of

⁸⁰ See Attali, Massa 2021.

⁸¹ Julian, *Misopogon* 33.361b; Ammianus Marcellinus 22.12.8.

⁸² John Chrysostom, *On Babylas* 90.

⁸³ From John Chrysostom's text, we know that the *martyrion* was erected in the area of the temple, but the author only suggests that it was a place where worshipers could enter, and that the *martyrion* could already be seen at the entrance to the suburb: John Chrysostom, *On Babylas* 70.

⁸⁴ The installation of a martyr cult inside a pagan site is also attested at Canopus, Egypt. There, the monks had gathered the bones of the martyrs and replaced the traditional worship: see Eunapius of Sardis, *The Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* 6.114–116, and the commentary by Goulet 2014, I, 347.

⁸⁵ John Chrysostom, *Against Judaizing Christians* 1.6.2–3 and 1.8.1 (PG 48, 851–852 and 855); *On Titus* 3.2 (PG 62, 679.6–11).

Zeus during the Hellenistic period.⁸⁶ In Roman literature, it appears as an oracular site where Vespasian, who had been sent to suppress the first Judaeen revolt against Rome in 67, learned that he was destined to become emperor.⁸⁷ According to Tacitus, there was a sacrificial altar on the site but no temple.⁸⁸ The early 4th century neo-Platonic philosopher Iamblicus wrote of Carmel as a “holy mountain” where Pythagoras had retired for “sacred pursuits”.⁸⁹ The status of the mountain as a pagan cultic site is confirmed by a 2nd- or early 3rd-century fragment of a monumental statue found on the north side of the mountain. Its base bore a dedication to “Heliopolitan Zeus [of] Carmel”.⁹⁰ Christian pilgrims of the 4th century went there to visit the site of Elijah’s altar, in keeping with the Biblical narrative (*1 Kings* 18).⁹¹

A rectangular cave with benches and steps carved from the rock is located on the western slope of the mountain.⁹² Between the 1st and 3rd centuries, a decorated niche, 2.4 meters high, was carved in the south wall; additional smaller niches were also found. About 225 inscriptions were etched on the east and west walls of the cave during Antiquity, mostly in Greek: they usually only consist of personal names with the phrase “be remembered” (*mnesthe*) or “be happy” (*euthucheï*). The word “veneration” (*proskynema*) also appears.⁹³ None of the inscriptions give any indication as to the visitors’ religious self-identification. However, some may allude to ritual practices specific to one group, as with the dedication of “the god’s image” (*theou ikasian*), a typically pagan phrase.⁹⁴ The few engraved or carved drawings on the walls also point towards Jewish, pagan, and possibly Christian visitors. In addition to a few *menorot* there is a drawing which may depict a toga-wearing man pouring a libation in front of a statue. On the basis of both ancient and medieval literature, scholars agree that Jews and Christians associated the site with Elijah and simultaneously visited it. Since the inscriptions and drawings cannot be dated in relation to one another, it is not certain that pagans still came alongside them during Late Antiquity, but it remains a possibility, especially since some inscriptions identified as pagan were engraved over older ones.

86 Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplus* 104.

87 Suetonius, *Life of Vespasian* 5.6.

88 Tacitus, *Histories* 2.78.3.

89 Iamblicus, *The Life of Pythagoras* 3.14.

90 Avi-Yonah 1952.

91 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Onomasticon*, s.v. “Karmêlos, horos” 37v.

92 Ovadiah, Pierri 2015.

93 Ovadiah, Pierri 2015, inscription n° 50.

94 Ovadiah, Pierri 2015, inscription n° 24.

Menouthis

Several Christian sources from the 5th to 7th centuries describe the village of Menouthis, near Canopus (*Aegyptus*), as a shared site, visited by pagans, Christians as well as Jews. Menouthis was originally the location of a healing sanctuary of Isis. In 391, bishop Theophilus of Alexandria destroyed the temples of Canopus, aided by Egyptian monks;⁹⁵ it seems that in the wake of this event, a monastery called Metanoia was established in Menouthis, with a church dedicated to the Evangelists.⁹⁶ However, at the time, the pagan sanctuary was still functioning, and people came there to be cured from their ailments. According to fragments of 5th- or 6th-century homilies attributed to Cyril, who succeeded his uncle Theophilus as bishop of Alexandria, he had received a divinely inspired dream and was ordered to transfer the relics of the Egyptian martyr Cyrus from the city to Metanoia; Cyrus had been a doctor, and his transfer to Menouthis was an explicit attempt at competing with Isis there. Providing local Christians with a theologically sound and ecclesiastically sanctioned healing shrine to the “true heavenly doctor to whom the almighty God has granted the power of healing” prevented them from “fall[ing] into error” by seeking Isis’ help. Cyrus’ relics, as well as those of another Egyptian martyr named John, were deposited in a *martyrion* inside the former church of the Evangelists, renamed church of the Holy martyrs.⁹⁷ While, according to this account, the relics were transferred into the church before 429, it may be that the martyrs’ cult was only introduced in Menouthis in ca. 489.⁹⁸ According to the bishop Sophronius of Jerusalem, who wrote an account of Cyrus and John’s miracles in 610/615, after he had himself been cured of cataracts at Metanoia, it was the power of those martyrs that made the sanctuary (*hieron*) of Isis disappear under the sand and sea, along with her statue (*agalma*) and her altar (*bomos*).⁹⁹ A hagiographic text of the 6th century, specified that, while the cult of Isis was not performed openly anymore at the end of the 5th century, sacrifices were still offered to “idols” in Menouthis, inside the house of the priestess of Isis.¹⁰⁰ Pagans as well as people who professed to be Christians came to ask the goddess for a cure, before her displaced sanctuary was finally destroyed by monks in 489 in spite of the fact that it had been walled off for protection. In this Christian account, Menouthis appears as a single site disputed between Isis and the Christian martyrs and visited by pagans as well as

⁹⁵ Eunapius of Sardis, *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* 6.11.

⁹⁶ Jerome, *Rule of Pachomius* 51 (*PL* 23, 62–63) in Deseille 1980 [1968], 11.

⁹⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily* 18 (*CPG* 5262, *BHG* 0472–0474); see also <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E03563>

⁹⁸ Montserrat 1998, 261.

⁹⁹ Sophronius of Jerusalem, *The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John* 70, in Gascou 2006, 219–227 (*PG* 87.3 col. 3693–3696).

¹⁰⁰ Ps-Zachariah of Mytilene, *Life of Severus* 27–29.

Christians for about a century before monks could prevent the local pagan rituals from being performed.

While academic studies dealing with Menouthis as a disputed site finally overrun by Christians focus on their confrontation with local pagans, one Christian text also mentions Jewish presence there. In his account of Cyrus and John's miracles, Sophronius mentions that these martyrs also cured a Jewish woman of cancer, but that it had happened a long time ago. Since the martyrs Cosmas and Damian, who had a shrine located nearby in Alexandria, had also famously performed a similar miracle, he did not feel the need to tell the story again.¹⁰¹ Sophronius may not have wanted to include this specific story because the attribution of the same miracle to different sets of saints could be used as an argument against the authenticity of Christian miracles. Nevertheless, the circulation of a story about a Jewish woman being healed by Christian martyrs at Menouthis does attest that, for some Christians, Menouthis was also conceived as a site shared between Jews and Christians because of its (Christian) healing properties. While this sharing was presented as only temporary, being a step towards Christian appropriation, and had a clear anti-Jewish polemical intent – the woman's cure was to carry pork meat on her breast –, it does paint Menouthis as a site that Christians and Jews visited alongside each other. Although the martyrs' relics were transferred from Menouthis during the 7th century, the site apparently remained a pilgrimage center.

4.2. Insertion inside a *temenos*: the case of Sardis

Christian or Jewish settlements within *temenos* boundaries seem to be very rare, at least in the 4th century, but also in the first half of the 5th century. There are only few documented cases. According to several Christian literary testimonies, the Great Church of Alexandria was constructed by leave of the emperor Constantius II between 339 and 356 at the *Kaisareion*, also called *Sebasteion* or *Augusteum*, which was the center of the imperial cult in the city.¹⁰² However, there is no proof that the church superseded the actual temple since the precinct included various buildings.

Interestingly, in Sardis (*Lydia*), two instances of Jewish and Christian buildings being constructed inside a pre-existing pagan *temenos* are documented by archaeological sources. A massive synagogue, the largest known in Antiquity, was constructed inside the bath-gymnasium complex built during the 1st and 2nd

101 Sophronius of Jerusalem, *The Miracles of the Saints Cyrus and John* 30.13–14, in Gascou 2006, 106. For the story of the Jewish woman cured by Cosmas and Damian, see Festugière 1971, 100–101.

102 Τῆ ἐν τῷ Καισαρείῳ, in Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians (Historia Arianorum)* 74.2; Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 69.2.2. See Sjöquist 1954, and Martin 1984.

centuries. This public building had a two-story colonnaded court dedicated to the imperial family and used for ceremonies.¹⁰³ There is considerable debate about when and why the south-east corner of the complex, adjoining the palestra, began to be used for Jewish ritual activities. Dates ranging from the 2nd to the 6th centuries have been proposed, with the synagogue probably reaching its final architectural form during the 4th century according to the excavators.¹⁰⁴ The massive building project may have drained the city's finances, prompting officials to either sell a fraction of it to a Jewish community or to give it over to them so that they would finish some of the construction work.¹⁰⁵ The synagogue was entered from a forecourt with a marble fountain. While this fountain may have been used for ablutions before entering the synagogue, an (undated) inscription from Sardis counts "the fountain of the synagogue" (*krene tou synagogiou*) among the city public fountains:¹⁰⁶ therefore, the forecourt could have been a specifically shared location of the already shared bath-gymnasium complex. The synagogue, which was at some point outfitted with *spolia* from the temples of Hera and Cybele, seemingly remained active until the city was abandoned in 616.¹⁰⁷

The local temple of Artemis provides us with an interesting case study.¹⁰⁸ While it flourished during the Early Roman period, it began to decline during the 3rd century. Alluvial deposits from the nearby Pactolus River accumulated on the site, and residential buildings as well as an increasing number of graves appeared within the temple's precinct. Before 400, a small chapel was erected just outside the temple building, with its south wall coming up to the south-east temple's colonnade but without actually connecting with it. The chapel was extended during the 6th century: its surface area doubled but it was still dwarfed by the temple. Two skeletons were found buried under the church during the excavations; archaeologists concluded that the Christian building had been erected as a *martyrion* connected with the nearby tombs. In addition, some 25 crosses were etched on the temple's main door, close to the church, with the inscription "Light Life" (*phos zoe*) also scratched there.¹⁰⁹

In both the bath-gymnasium and the temple's cases, there is no indication that the non-Jewish and non-Christian rituals stopped being performed when the Jewish or Christian cult began inside the *temenos*. Both buildings were also

103 Yegül 1986.

104 Hanfmann 1972, 432; Kroll 2001; Magness 2005.

105 Seager 1972, 432.

106 Hanfmann 1983, 169.

107 Hanfmann 1983, 168–178.

108 Foss 1976, 48–49, and Hanfmann 1983, 192–195. For the location of the church and temple, see <https://sardisexpedition.org/en/essays/about-church-m> (fig. 2).

109 Buckler, Robinson 1914, 44.

dedicated to imperial cult: the statues of Antoninus and Faustina remained in the Artemision, and the city still boasted having been *neokoros* of the imperial cult twice in an inscription from 459.¹¹⁰ According to the Christian writer Isidore of Pelusium, pagans were still performing rituals inside the temple of Artemis in Ephesos by digging the ground there at the beginning of the 5th century.¹¹¹ While we do not have any similar testimony regarding pagan ritual activities inside the temple of Sardis, the fact that no Christian construction ever encroached upon it does leave open the possibility of a continued pagan cult on the site, even without on-site bloody sacrifices.

4.3. Joint occupation and spatial reorganization

In the few cases of active sharing documented by at least one literary description, the patterns of spatial occupation depend on religious affiliations, while some archaeological sites may have been reorganized to accommodate shared use of a common space.

While describing people from various religions coming to Mamre to celebrate the same festival, Sozomen mentioned the church built there by Constantine, but explicitly stated that all the people who came to celebrate the festival were mixed. This description is supported by archaeological finds: the first excavator of the site found that the original church only occupied a third of the original Herodian enclosure; scholars then postulated that this basilica did purposefully not include the tree and the well associated with Abraham so as not to appropriate an already existing ritual space.¹¹²

According to the Piacenza pilgrim writing (ca. 575), a *cancellus* separated Jews and Christians inside the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron.¹¹³ Indeed, on the Madaba map which, albeit idealized, has been proven accurate in its architectural depiction of religious buildings, Hebron is illustrated with two attached buildings, which we suggest could represent the Herodian *peribolos* that was altered during the 2nd century and an adjoining Christian basilica.¹¹⁴

In some places, there may have been a common wish between local Jews and Christians to create a new shared space. In Capernaum, the monumental synagogue was located only a few meters away from the building identified as the house of Peter by Christian tradition from the 1st century onwards. While the construction date of the synagogue cannot be ascertained, the *insula* between the two buildings was cleared during the 5th century. Benjamin Arubas and Rina

110 Buckler, Robinson 1932, n^o 18.

111 Isidoros of Pelusium, *Letters* 1.55 (PG 78, 217).

112 Mader 1957, 111–115 (vol. 1).

113 Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerary* 30. 1–3.

114 Donner 1992, 61.

Talgam have proposed several hypotheses to account for this spatial reorganization, including the possibility of a concerted/joint building program.¹¹⁵

5. Rites and practices

Being able to observe and interview contemporary visitors of shared religious sites, anthropologists have access to numerous sources about the rituals performed there, sometimes enabling them to determine how they evolved and why. For instance, in the Saidnaya church (today in Syria) and the Ghriba synagogue (Djerba, Tunisia), the custom of removing one's shoes when entering the building results from Christian and Jewish imitation of Muslim practices respectively.¹¹⁶ Ancient sources are very difficult to interpret when studying religious practices since, most of the time, we only have one document which mentions rituals performed on a specific shared site.

When the Eucharist was not celebrated, Christian pilgrims mention reading Biblical texts and praying when visiting pilgrimage sites.¹¹⁷ Egeria's greatest desire during her travels was to read on-site each corresponding Biblical passage; her group also sometimes read Psalms.¹¹⁸ When writing about her visit at the church and *martyrion* of St. Thomas in Edessa, Egeria stated that her group did what they usually did in holy places (*quae consuetudo erat fieri in locis sanctis*) including prayers (*orationes*); they also read from St. Thomas' writings. Although Egeria never implies that any of the locations she visited held any significance for non-Christians, other Christian pilgrims do. The Bordeaux pilgrim, while visiting the Temple Mount in Jerusalem around 333, described a Jewish ritual annually performed there: the anointing of a pierced stone (*lapis pertusus*).¹¹⁹ Since this ritual is unheard of, many have considered the pilgrim testimony unreliable. If he did describe a historical practice, it may have been specific to this specific site, in connection with the rabbinic tradition of a "foundation stone" on the Temple Mount.¹²⁰ At the end of the 6th century, when the Piacenza pilgrim described the cave of the patriarchs in Hebron as a site shared by Christians and Jews, he wrote that those offered much incense and lamps to celebrate the "Deposition of Jacob". However, those two offerings as well as the type of festival invoked, the *depositio*, are characteristic of the Christian cult of martyrs. The offering of incense and lamps on tombs by Jewish pilgrims during Late An-

115 Arubas, Talgam 2014.

116 Albera, Pénicaut 2016.

117 The Biblical texts included some which were later excluded from the orthodox Christian canon and are now considered Apocrypha.

118 Egeria, *Journal* 4.3–4; 11.3; 14.1; 15.4; 20.3; 21.1; 23.5.

119 Bordeaux pilgrim, *Itinerary* 591; see transl. by Wilkinson 1971, 157.

120 See Attali 2023.

tiquity and its chronology are debated.¹²¹ Our witness may therefore have interpreted Jewish practices as they were described to him through a Christian ritual lens; he may also have documented a historical and otherwise unattested Jewish festival, whose development may have been influenced by the Christian pilgrims who visited the same site. In this case, did the sharing of religious practices serve to impede or, conversely, to reinforce the construction of multiple religious identities within the same space?

The list given by Sozomen, who catalogued all rituals performed at Mamre by Jews, Christians, and pagans, is also far from straightforward.¹²² After stating that all were “appropriately honoring this site by performing rituals”, the Christian historian began by distinguishing between those who prayed to God, i. e., Jews and Christians, and those who offered wine libations and bloody sacrifices to the *angeloi*, i. e., pagans. These two groups are separated from one another by the syntactic construction *hoi men/hoi de*. In a later sentence, Sozomen explains that people threw various things into Abraham’s well “in accordance with pagan rituals”; he then distinguishes between two types of offering: some put lit clay lamps on the water while others threw wine, cakes, coins, perfume, or incense. To differentiate between the groups of visitors he associated with each type of offerings, he employed the same syntactic construction (*hoi men/hoi de*) he had previously used to distinguish between non-pagans and pagans. Consequently, it remains difficult to understand whether Sozomen meant to match one type of offering with one group, or to imply that all visitors, even Christians and Jews, followed the “pagan rituals” at least partially. Indeed, the excavators of Mamre found many lamps at the site, including several decorated with crosses, Christian monograms, and inscriptions, including one reading “the light of Christ shines upon all”: some of those were also bearing seven-branched Jewish candelabra.¹²³

Religious sites where lamps decorated with Christian iconography and formulas were found alongside others bearing mythical and sometimes Jewish elements have been interpreted as shared, on the grounds that each visitor would offer an object which bore the marks of his or her own religion. In consequence, the offering of lamps, especially when thrown into water like at the “Fountain of lamps” in Corinth, has been interpreted as a ritual common to all in Late Antiquity, like “the consultation of oracular shrines, ritual acclamations to a unique deity or the veneration of angels”, even if ecclesiastical authorities denounced it.¹²⁴ However, even when their production can be dated on stylistic grounds, the presence of lamps with Christian *décor* in known pagan sanctuaries, as in the

121 On incense, see Rutgers 1999, and Caseau 2012.

122 Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.4.3–5.

123 Mader 1957, 151–164 (vol. 1), and 160–171 (vol. 2).

124 Busine 2015, 8. On the offering of lamps in water, see Jordan 1994. On ecclesiastical denunciation of those rituals, see Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses* 1.8.

cave of Pan in Vari and the sanctuary of Zeus Ombrios on the Hymettus in Attica (*Achaea*), does not necessarily prove that Christians visited these sites.¹²⁵ Pagans could have brought whatever lamps were available to them, not caring about engraved images or formulas.

If we now turn to Jewish sources, rabbinic legislation held it that Jews could “benefit” from the gardens of pagan sanctuaries as well as from their baths; they probably held feasts in the gardens since space was needed for large gatherings.¹²⁶ While rabbinic sources do not explicitly mention any other shared religious sites, prescriptions about a blessing to be recited on sites “where a miracle happened for Israel” may suggest that some were also visited by Christian pilgrims.¹²⁷ The Babylonian Talmud, written down around 600, added a list of such miracle sites through a series of older traditions (*baraitot*), based on miraculous events told in the Hebrew Bible.¹²⁸ Among those sites, some have no parallel in Late Antique sources: it did not seem that they were identified during this time period. Others were said not to be identifiable anymore according to the very rabbis who enforced the ritual. In addition, the rabbinic movement was reluctant to sanctify sites outside Jerusalem. Consequently, it has been argued that the rabbinic list was largely ironic, discreetly making fun of either Jews who were trying to find miracle sites, Christian pilgrims who were looking for them, or both.¹²⁹ Indeed, the rabbinic list did include some sites that were identified by both Jewish and Christian tradition during the Roman period. From the 2nd century onwards, many Christian texts featured contemporary eyewitnesses who claimed seeing the salt statue of Lot’s wife (*Genesis* 19.26).¹³⁰ At the end of the 1st century, the Jewish historian Josephus also mentioned seeing it; another Jewish Greek text stated that “evidence (*martyrion*)” still remains with “a pillar of salt (*stela alos*) standing as a monument (*mnemeion*) to an unbelieving soul”.¹³¹ However, since these two sources date to the Early Imperial era, the site may not have been identified anymore by Jews during Late Antiquity. If it still was, the site known as the location of the salt statue may not have been the same for Christians and Jews. The identification of Biblical and para-biblical *lieux de mémoire* did evolve and often differed among religious groups.¹³² However, the similarities between the rabbinic list of miracle sites where to recite a blessing and Christian pilgrim-

125 On Attic caves in Late Antiquity, see Fowden 1988; Baumer 2010, 78–84; Baumer 2018.

126 Vana 1997.

127 Mishna *Berakhot* 9.1.

128 Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 54a–b.

129 Boustán 2015.

130 Clement of Rome, *Letters* 11.2; Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies* 4.31; *Martyrdom of Pionios* 4.17; Prudentius, *The Origin of Sin (Hamartigenia)* 742–753; Theodosius, *De situ terrae sanctae* 20; Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerary* 15.3. See Munier 1989.

131 Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.203; *Wisdom of Solomon* 10.7.

132 See Attali 2023.

age itineraries does open the possibility that Jews and Christians met there, with Jews reciting benedictions and Christians saying prayers reading from the Bible.

6. Trends, documents, inventory

Our approach does not aim at giving a general impression of the Eastern provinces of the Late Empire, or even a diocese or a province, over several centuries. In trying to identify and describe shared uses of the same site among groups of individuals of different religious affiliations, as well as their implications for the construction of identities, we are not looking for homogeneity. However, as Robert Hayden reminds us in his chapter, we should not perceive religious sites only “as loci of interaction between persons of different communities at specific moments, but rather that control over the physical aspects of sites was indicative of relations between the interacting communities on larger levels”. The author emphasizes the importance of the networks of religious sites, what is called a “religioscape”, i. e., “the distribution in spaces through time of the physical manifestations of specific religious communities and of the populations that built them”.¹³³ The various religious sites explored in our volume contribute to a broader picture of the religious trends of the Late Antique Eastern Roman Empire.

Even if the sources explicitly document the presence of sharing in the provinces of the Empire, the study of the contexts remains complicated. All the documents analyzed in this volume show that we are dealing with differently represented religious sites in our source material. First, we find sites explicitly recognized by a literary source as actively shared (e. g., Mamre). Second, we have sites that the sources do not present as actively shared, although they highlight the simultaneous presence of several groups (e. g., Daphne). Finally, we come across sites where a series of documents produced by different groups attest to simultaneous attendance by individuals or groups of different religious affiliations (e. g., Sardis).

On the basis of the few cases mentioned in this chapter, we have tried to put together a tentative inventory of shared religious sites in the Late Antique Eastern Roman Empire. As always in this period, the identification of religious background and/or affiliation remains problematic. The religious categories used in the following table are taken from ancient authors or modern scholars. We do not claim to provide here a comprehensive list: our intention is merely to present the current state of research. The proposed distinction between pagans, Jews, and Christians is not intended to reflect the historical reality of the Empire. It is based exclusively on the way in which the sharing is represented in the relevant

133 See the chapter by R.M. Hayden in this volume.

contemporary sources at the time or in the modern secondary literature on the subject.

In terms of “religioscape”, the inventoried cases would seem to give a major role to the provinces of *Palaestina* I and II. According to the available documentation, it seems that these territories exhibited wider dynamics of active sharing. However, in addition to the problem of the sources, the religious sites of *Palaestina* were considered more significant from a theological point of view. This explains the fact that they drew more attention from Christian authors who condemned sharing because they wished to draw strict identity boundaries between the various religious groups.

| Province | Religious site | Chronology | Evidence | Groups, visitors |
|---------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Achaea</i> | Cave of Pan in Vari (Attica)? | late 4 th / early 5 th c. | artefacts (lamps) | pagans, Christians |
| | Sanctuary of Zeus <i>Ombrios</i> (Hymettus) | late 4 th / early 5 th c. | archaeology | pagans, Christians |
| | Fountain of the lamps in Corinth | mid-5 th / mid-6 th c. | artefacts (lamps) | pagans, Jews, Christians |
| <i>Aegyptus</i> | <i>Kaisareion</i> of Alexandria | 4 th c. | literary text | pagans, Christians |
| | Canopus | late 4 th c. | literary text | pagans, Christians |
| | Menouthis | 6 th c. | literary text | pagans, Christians, Jews (?) |
| <i>Lydia</i> | Sardis bath-gymnasium complex | 3 rd –6 th c. | archaeology | pagans, Jews |
| | Sardis temple of Artemis | c. 400 | archaeology | pagans, Christians |
| <i>Palaestina I</i> | Former Jewish Temple site, Jerusalem | late 4 th –5 th c. | literary texts | Jews Christians |
| | Enclosure of Mamre | 4 th –5 th c. | literary texts, archaeology | pagans, Jews, Christians |
| | Cave of the Patriarchs, Hebron | 6 th c. | literary text, archaeology, | Jews, Christians |

| Province | Religious site | Chronology | Evidence | Groups, visitors |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | | iconography | |
| | Salt statue of Lot's wife? | 1 st –6 th c. | literary texts | Jews, Christians ¹³⁴ |
| <i>Palaestina II</i> | Gadara baths | 4 th –5 th c. | inscriptions, literary texts | pagans, Jews, Christians |
| | Cave of Elijah on Mount Carmel | 2 nd /6 th c. | inscriptions | pagans, Jews, Christians (Muslims) |
| | Galilean synagogues (Nazareth) | 6 th c. | literary text | Jews, Christians |
| | Capernaum synagogue/ House of Peter | 6 th c. | archaeology | Jews, Christians |
| <i>Pontus (diocese)</i> | <i>Ecclesiae</i> | 383 | legal text | Christians |
| <i>Syria I</i> | Antioch synagogues | 4 th c. | literary text | Jews, Christians |
| | Daphne (sanctuary of Apollo and its surroundings) | 4 th c. | literary texts | pagans, Jews, Christians |

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¹³⁴ While both Christian and Jewish sources mention a salt statue of Lot's wife near the Dead Sea, we do not know if they are referring to the same location; two competing sites may have existed simultaneously.

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“Law as a Weapon”. The Status of Temples, Heretic Churches, and Synagogues and the Legal Mechanisms for Their Confiscation and Reallocation to Catholic Churches (4th–5th c.)

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The phenomena of appropriation of polytheistic, Christian, Jewish, and Samaritan religious sites are abundantly documented by Church histories and hagiographies of the 4th and 5th centuries. These narratives, however, do not describe in detail the legal mechanisms underlying the operations. Their purpose is to highlight the strength of the mission, and they present the bishops as the main actors in the destructions, occupations, and appropriations. Certainly, it was the anarchic attacks of Christian crowds, sometimes led by bishops or monks, which often initiated the movement and forced the imperial authorities to react.

However, the confiscations and reallocations themselves were the responsibility of state officials. Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393–457) provides one example among others of how Christian authors could minimize the role of imperial power. The bishop of Cyrrhus writes that in 386 Marcellus, the new bishop of Apamea in Syria, was “the first to use the law as a weapon to destroy the city’s temple”.¹ Yet, the account fails to hide the fact that the initiative for the destruction had actually been taken by imperial authority. It is with the arrival of the praetorian prefect of the East (perhaps Kynegios Maternus, in office between 384 and 388, or the count of the East Deinias) and two military tribunes with soldiers that the operations had been launched.² In the majority of cases, it can be assumed that the scenes in which the confiscations really took place were those of the *officia* of the provincial governors and the central government of Constantinople. Upstream, the praetorian prefect or the count of the *Res privata* proposed (*suggestio*) a constitution to give a legal basis to the confiscations. The decisions of confiscations were pronounced by the courts of governors. Finally, their incorporation into the Treasury (*Aerarium*), and more precisely into the *Res privata*, and their reallocation to the churches, were carried out by the financial officers directed by the *rationalis res privata*.

Christian accounts present the attacks on polytheistic temples, churches of heretics, and Jewish and Samaritan synagogues and their conversion into Catho-

1 Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.22.

2 See Fowden 1978, 53–78; Cabouret 2014, 206–214; Belayche 2018, 227–231.

lic churches as joint actions of the same nature.³ In 388, in the Syrian city of Callinicum, the monks, led by the bishop, attacked not only the synagogue but also the church of the Valentinians. After his election in Alexandria, bishop Cyril closed the churches of the Novatians, and in 414, after serious altercations with the Jews of Alexandria, he led the crowd to the synagogues, which were destroyed. In Edessa, bishop Rabbula is said to have built a church dedicated to the martyr Stephen on the site of the synagogue and to have had four polytheistic temples destroyed. In the 420s, the striking actions of Barsauma and the monks in Phoenicia, Palestine, and Arabia would have consisted in overturning both the temples and the synagogues of these regions.

However, these actions could not be of the same nature because their legal bases were different and, consequently, the procedures carried out could not diverge. Indeed, from the point of view of patrimonial law as well as that of criminal law, the legal status of the different religious sites was radically different. These statutes were inherited from the *summa divisio* of classical law, which isolated the public and sacred sphere of the temples from the private world of exchange to which the churches and synagogues belonged.⁴ An analysis of the imperial constitutions issued between the reigns of Constantine and Theodosius II, then collected in the *Theodosian Code*, which ordered confiscations and reallocations of places of worship, reveals that the distinction between public and private law generally withstood the pressures of the policy of Christianization, except in a certain number of cases, the nature, chronology and scope of which we shall present in what follows.

1. Status and legal regimes of temples, churches, and synagogues

In order to understand the legal regime of temples in post-classical Roman law, we must take a detour through the doctrine of classical Roman law (2nd and 3rd centuries). Certainly, the picture drawn by the classical jurists may appear abstract and anachronistic. Nevertheless, the definitions and doctrinal classifications they provide are indispensable for understanding the ten or so imperial constitutions of the 4th and 5th centuries that constitute our main documentation, but which present the difficulty of being letters of an administrative nature whose purpose was pragmatic, and which often do not explicitly present the legal reasoning on which they were based.

3 This paragraph uses the list established by Lanfranchi 2014, 329.

4 In the present study, we leave aside the particular case of private sanctuaries reserved, it seems, for the use of the owner of a domain and his slaves. See Scheid 2010, 149–150.

1.1. *Res nullius in bonis*. Temples according to classical Roman law

In the second book of the *Institutes* (circa 160 CE), the jurist Gaius issued a *summa divisio rerum*. He distinguishes between *res* of divine right (*res divini iuris*) and *res* of human right (*res humani iuris*).⁵ The *res* of divine right are themselves divided into three categories: the *res sacrae* (places and things consecrated to the gods); the *res religiosae* (burial places reserved for the Manes); and the *res sanctae* (urban and castral enclosures). The *res sacrae* that concern us here are the *res quae diis superis consecratae sunt*.⁶ These are the temples, monuments, spaces, sacred woods, and springs that have been strictly delimited on the ground – *locus* – and that have been consecrated and dedicated to a god or a goddess.⁷ Gaius adds that a popular vote was necessary. To be considered as sacred, a place has to be consecrated *ex auctoritate populi Romani*, by a *lex* or a *senatus consultum*.⁸ In the provinces, the *loci* which had not been consecrated by the Roman people were not properly sacred, but they were regarded as such: *pro sacro habetur*.⁹ This legal fiction makes it possible to say that even in the absence of the *populus Romanus*, the *res* in the provinces could be held sacred.¹⁰

By these operations, the *res sacrae* were cut off from property and trade. They were excluded from private patrimony as well as from commerce, whether onerous or gratuitous (property, sale, inheritance, legacies, gifts, promises, and pledges). They were called “*res nullius in bonis*”, i. e., *res* that belonged to a patrimony that did not belong to anyone.¹¹ They shared this status, as Thomas points out, with things and places of “public utility”, *res usibus publicis relictæ* (squares, theaters, markets, porticoes, roads, forests, lands, rivers).¹²

5 In the following paragraph, we refer to the much more precise presentation of Ramon 2016, 250–255.

6 Gaius, *Institutes* 2.4: *Sacrae sunt quae diis superis consecratae sunt; religiosae quae diis Manibus relictæ sunt*.

7 For an account of the consecration and dedication rites, see Cavallero 2018, 219–249.

8 Gaius, *Institutes* 2.5–6: *Sed sacrum quidem hoc solum existimatur quod ex auctoritate populi Romani consecratum est, veluti lege de ea re lata aut senatusconsulto facto. Religiosum vero nostra voluntate facimus mortuum inferentes in locum nostrum, si modo eius mortui funus ad nos pertineat*.

9 Gaius, *Institutes* 2.7: *Sed in provinciali solo placet plerisque solum religiosum non fieri, quia in eo solo dominium populi Romani est vel Caesaris, nos autem possessionem tantum et usum fructum habere videmur; utique tamen, etiamsi non sit religiosum, pro religioso habetur: item quod in provinciis non ex auctoritate populi Romani consecratum est, proprie sacrum non est, tamen pro sacro habetur*.

10 See Ramon 2016, 250–255, and Scheid 2010, 143.

11 On *res in nullius bonis* in classical Roman law, see Thomas 2002, 1431–1447.

12 Gaius writes that “anything sacred or religious or perpetually exposed for the use of the people, such as a forum or a theater” is not allowed to be traded (Gaius, *Institutes* 3.97). At the end of the 3rd century, the jurisconsult Paul does not say anything different. One cannot agree

The classical doctrine established a fundamental distinction between, on the one hand, the sacred and religious sites (*sacra et religiosa loca*) and the things which were intended for the public (*res in publico uso*) and, on the other hand, the things which belonged to the city (*in pecunia populi*). Celsus (1st c.) said that no one could buy a thing of which he knew that: “the alienation is prohibited, like the sacred and religious places or the things of which one does not make trade, not in that they belong to the people (*non in pecunia populi*), but in that they are intended for the use of the public (*sed in publico usu habetur*), like the Field of Mars.”¹³ Papinianus (2nd–3rd c.) also stated: “If there is something sacred, religious or public, the sale will be void. If the thing is not of a public use but in the patrimony of the *fiscus* (*si res non in usu publico sed in patrimonio fisci*), the sale is valid.”¹⁴ Thus, there were two categories of public properties (*res publicae*): inalienable *res* and disposable *res* of which the city, the *populus* or the *fiscus* had the property. One spoke about the second of *pecunia populi*, *patrimonium populi*, *patrimonium fisci* in Rome and *bona civitatum*, *pecunia communis* in the cities of the Empire.¹⁵

The classical doctrine does not specify who was behind the absence of owner of the *res sacrae* so that there is no consensus among modern historians.¹⁶ According to some, the owners would have been the city, the *populus Romanus* or the *fiscus*. The purpose of the ritual of the *consecratio* would have been to perpetually reserve the public good for a sacred use. Yet, the owner would not change, and the difference with other *res publicae* would only be felt from the point of view of management. This would obey a specific regime with a separate and independent fund.¹⁷ According to others, the owners would have been the gods themselves. The famous passage of Gaius quoted above as well as many literary sources suggest that the gods would really have been regarded as the

to sell “any thing sacred or religious or left perpetually for the use of the public, such as a forum or a basilica” (*Digest* 45.1.83.5). See Thomas 2002, 1436.

13 Pomponius: *Sed Celsus filius ait, hominem liberum scientem te emere non posse: nec cuiuscumque rei, si scias alienationem non esse, ut sacra et religiosa loca: aut quorum commercium non sit, ut publica, quae non in pecunia populi, sed in publico usu habeantur, ut est campus Martius*. Lib. 5 ad Sabinum (*Digest* 18.1.6 pr.). Unless otherwise mentioned, translations are mine.

14 Papinianus: *Lege venditionis illa facta, si quid sacri, aut religiosi, aut publici est, eius nihil venit, si res non in usu publico, sed in patrimonio fisci erit, venditio eius valebit* (*Digest* 18.1.72.1).

15 Thomas 2002, 1435.

16 See Ramon 2016, 255–263, who provides a comprehensive overview of the available sources and a critical discussion of the different interpretations proposed by legal historians.

17 This thesis is based on a passage of Frontinus which indicates that the sacred groves (*lucos sacri*) undoubtedly belonged to the *populus Romanus* (*indubitate populi Romani*). Frontinus, *Liber Gromaticus* (Lachmann 56).

holders of a right of property. The ritual of the *consecratio* would really have had the effect to give the property to the divinity. In practice, the public good was thought of as having been transferred from the magistrates of the city to the priests, considered as *procuratores* of the deities. According to a last opinion, the two first positions would betray the spirit of the Roman Law by seeking at all costs an owner for the *res nullius in bonis* whereas they did not have any, as would the constitution *inventio thesauri* of Hadrian indicate. This constitution provides that the one who discovers a treasure on his own property or *in sacro aut in religioso loco* is the owner of its totality, whereas the one who discovers it on the property of others, or on the public property (*res publica*) is entitled to only half.¹⁸ Thus, contrary to *res publicae* assimilated to private properties, sacred and religious sites would be considered as having no owner.

The definition of *res sacrae* as *res nullius in bonis*, their clear distinction from the field of the *res privatae* as well as from public things which were nevertheless alienable, finally, the problem of the exact identity of their owners constitutes essential tools of comprehension since the imperial constitutions of the *Theodosian Code* contemplate the legal status of the temples only under the dynamic report of the procedures of appropriation and transfer. It is therefore only through the path of the actual processes that we can go back to the very essence of what the temples had become in post-classical Roman law.

1.2. Temples and the *ius templorum* in post-classical law (4th–5th c.)

The temples remained *res sacrae*, since they continued to be included in the category of inalienable things proper to *res nullius in bonis*. This is what emerges from a constitution of Honorius of November 6, 405, which is based on the precedent of a lost constitution of Constantine.¹⁹ These goods are not properties: *nullum ex his posse fructum adquiri*. They are strictly separated from the circuit of exchanges: those who – within the framework of the procedure of the *petitiones* – will make the petition of goods of the temples risk criminal prosecution under the charge of sacrilege: *Omnisque se ab hac nefaria petitione retineant scientes nullum ex hoc posse fructum adquiri, sed huius decreti violatores sacrilegii poenam contrahere*. A constitution given in the East on May 13, 425 confirms that the temples incorporated in the *Res privata* of Constantinople were excluded from the procedure of the petitions (10.10.32): *exceptis iuris templorum possessionibus*.

¹⁸ *Institutes* 2.1.39: *Thesaurus, quos quis in suo loco invenerit, divus Hadrianus, naturalem aequitatem secutus, ei concessit qui invenerit, idemque statuit.*

¹⁹ *Theodosian Code* 10.10.24.

The expression *ius templorum* already appeared in a constitution of Valentinian. In 364, this emperor ordered that the sales or gifts of all places and estates which were currently in the right of the temples, and which had been sold or given by different princes be annulled (*universa loca vel praedia quae nunc in iure templorum sunt*).²⁰ There was a category of goods which were unavailable because they were subject to the law of the temples (*ius templorum*). According to Roland Delmaire, the notion of *ius templorum* would designate a separate service within the financial offices of the *Res privata*. In any case, it is certain that all the unavailable goods of the *Res privata* – including those of the temples – had to constitute a clearly separate category from the legal and financial point of view.²¹

Not all the properties of the temples belonged to the category of *res sacrae*. One remembers that the classical doctrine distinguished the zones of sacredness and public use which were prohibited from appropriation, and the zones of pure domainality, which were inserted in the circuit of the property and the exchange. Some of the land, buildings, and objects of the temples belonged to this second category. Theodor Mommsen indicates that the *res* that produced income, which served for the purchase of animals intended for the sacrifices and the maintenance of the priests, were the object of a right of ownership.²² A constitution of Gratian seems to deal with these *res*. At an unknown date, the emperor ordered that “all the places that the error of the ancients had attributed to pagan cults” be annexed to the *Res privata*. Contrary to what one may think, the measure concerned only those lands whose revenues were used for the maintenance of temples and clergy. The continuation of the constitution indeed attacks those who “had usurped the income of the temples” (*Omnia etiam loca quae sacris error veterum deputavit, secundum divi Gratiani constituta nostrae rei iubemus sociari*).²³ This reading seems to be confirmed by the testimony of Ambrose who writes that the measure had only concerned the grounds of the temples whose incomes were diverted to other ends, instead of fulfilling their function which consisted in supporting the expenses of the temple (*sola sublata sunt praedia quia non religiose utebantur iis quae religionis iure defenderent ... praedia igitur intercepta, non iura sunt*).²⁴

20 *Theodosian Code* 10.1.8.

21 See Delmaire 1989, 643, and Delmaire 2009, 227 n. 1.

22 Mommsen 1952, 59.

23 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.20.

24 Ambrose, *Letters* 18.16; 17.3.

1.3. Churches and synagogues, private property treated unequally

The regime of unavailability which affected the property of the *res sacrae* constituted an exception. As Thomas points out, the general rule in Roman law was that *res* had a patrimonial and commercial vocation and circulated in the sphere of *res privatae*.²⁵ This certainly was the case with Christian churches and Jewish and Samaritan synagogues.

In *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, Lactantius quotes the famous edict taken in Milan by Constantine in 313 by which he put an end to the persecutions of the Christians. A passage of this edict is particularly interesting for our subject. The passage orders the handing over, without compensation, of places confiscated from the Christians. We learn that, on the one hand, there were dwelling houses belonging to individuals (*ea loca tantum ad quae convenire consuerunt*), and, on the other hand, *loca* called churches, which belonged to *corpora* (*ad ius corporis eorum id est ecclesiarum, non hominum singulorum*).²⁶ In both cases, the text uses the vocabulary of *dominium*. We still find the vocabulary of private law in an imperial constitution of the beginning of the 5th century. Against the Christians of the Novatian sect, Honorius ordered that the places of their assemblies be taken away from their owners (*domini*) and confirmed that their churches were private property (*privata res*).²⁷

About the owners of the churches, Gaudemet wonders if it should be considered that the Christian community had the legal status of a legal entity allowing it to own a patrimony, if it was the bishop who was the owner of his church as a physical person, or if the churches themselves were assimilated to foundations with the right of ownership.²⁸ In any case, we know that since Constantine's constitution of July 3, 321, the churches were assimilated to *collegia*, since the text gives the capacity to be instituted as heirs (*factio testamenti*) to the "most holy and venerable catholic assembly (*concilium*)".²⁹

Churches obviously enjoyed more favorable treatment than ordinary private property. This was the result of privileges that had been claimed and obtained by the servants of these places, privileges that are immunities attached to property (as opposed to personal immunities). In 360, following the Council of Rimini, the emperor Constantius exempted ecclesiastical sites from the land tax as well as from the *annona*.³⁰

25 Thomas 2002, 1450.

26 Lactantius, *On the Deaths of Persecutors* 48.2.

27 *Theodosian Code* 16.5.57.

28 Gaudemet 1958, 299–310.

29 *Theodosian Code* 16.2.4 = *Justinian Code* 1.2.1.

30 *Theodosian Code* 16.2.15 (year 360). For a list of the *privilegia rebus*, see Gaudemet 1958, 312, and Delmaire 2005, 58–60.

The Jews, too, had obtained a privilege for their synagogues. In 368, a synagogue located somewhere near Trier in Germany had been exempted from the *metatum* (forced requisition in the name of *hospitium*) by a western constitution.³¹ However, this example is unique, and it is obviously false to say, contrary to what Juster alleges, that the synagogues had received the status of *aedes sacrae*. Certainly, the constitution of 368 designates them as *religionum loca*, but the context shows that it was only a question of marking the particularity of the functions of the synagogues compared to those of a *privatorum domus*. Thus, the term *religionum loca* had an undeniable symbolic significance, but had no legal impact, for synagogues were never specially protected like temples, nor like churches.³²

The contrast between the legal status of temples and churches on the one hand, and that of synagogues on the other, becomes even clearer when one examines the difference in penalties for those who attacked the former and those who attacked the latter. In classical law, attacks against temples were qualified as crimes as attested by the legislation of the Augustan period which included in the same public offence urban violence against temples and public places. At the time of the Severan dynasty, the theft of *pecunia sacra* had become a crime called *sacrilegium*. This crime was punished by death, after an *extra ordinem* trial.³³ With the gradual sacralization of churches, due to the development of the rite of dedication and the practice of translating relics, Roman law began in some respects to reserve for them a regime modelled on that of temples.³⁴ At the beginning of the 5th century, the churches were criminally protected on the same model as the temples. Indeed, attacks on churches and on church property were qualified as sacrileges.³⁵ In 431, a constitution to the praetorian prefect of the East Antiochus borrows the legal vocabulary reserved for the *res sacrae*, describing the churches as “temples of the most high god”, the altars as “sacrosanct” and describing once again laying hands on the refugees as “sacrilege”, as Sotinel points out.³⁶

In contrast, those who attacked synagogues (occupation, theft, destruction, burning ...) risked lesser penalties. Certainly, those who had attacked the synagogue of Callinicum in 388 had been sentenced to caning, but, as we know, this sentence had been strongly contested by the bishop of Milan, Ambrose. From the beginning of the 5th century, the constitutions preserved in the *Theodosian Code* show that the imperial power was content to condemn attacks just for the

31 *Theodosian Code* 7.8.2.

32 Demougeot 1956, 25–49; Berger 1965, 143–163; Nemo-Pekelman 2010, 104–106.

33 *Digest* 48.13.11.

34 Sotinel 2005, 414.

35 *Theodosian Code* 16.2.31 and 40.

36 *Theodosian Code* 11.45.4. See Sotinel 2005, 429–432, and Markus 1994, 257–271.

sake of doing so, but that it administered derisory sanctions. The destruction of synagogues were, at best, sanctioned by the obligation to rebuild them, and their occupation by the obligation to restore them. As regards the religious objects stolen from synagogues, the constitutions provided for financial compensation equal to four times their value. These civil sanctions were neither more nor less than those provided for by the common law protecting private property.³⁷

Taking into account the very different legal status of the places of worship, what were the legal bases and procedures that allowed their confiscation and eventual reallocation to Orthodox Christians?

2. The legal mechanisms of confiscation and reallocation of temples, churches, and synagogues to Catholic churches

It is difficult to distinguish between sanctuaries that disappeared as a result of voluntary destruction, abandonment or reallocation to churches. In fact, archaeological research strongly suggests a different scenario from the one bequeathed to us by the triumphant Christian narratives. Archaeological evidence shows that voluntary destructions were, in fact, rare, and that pagan sites had long periods of abandonment before they were reassigned to churches.³⁸ The hiatus is just as disturbing concerning the synagogues of the Levant (in Constantinople, Edessa, Sardis, Apamea, Antioch, Jerash, Alexandria) for which archaeological data provide evidence of monumental constructions precisely during the 4th and 5th centuries.³⁹

If one looks for traces of these phenomena in the legal sources, one notes, as early as the reign of Constantius, examples of confiscation of temples following the realization, within them, of illicit sacrifices. However, there is no trace of a general confiscation of temples in the praetorian prefecture of the East at the end of the 4th century or the beginning of the 5th, contrary to what has been said. As for the abandonment of sites, the legal translation of which would be the pronouncement of their *vacantia*, we only find one occurrence of it in the law, which is ambiguous, as we shall see (2.1). As far as the churches are concerned, we find examples of confiscations following the conviction of their members for heresy. Finally, there are laws providing for the confiscation of allegedly-abandoned synagogues as well as their confiscation in case of illicit construction

³⁷ On the progressive degradation of the protection of the synagogues due to the pressure of the ecclesiastics on the imperial power, see Nemo-Pekelman 2010, 83–101.

³⁸ Belayche 2018, 213.

³⁹ For a recent bibliography on the synagogues in Late Antiquity Palestine, Babylonia, Egypt (and the Western part of the Empire), see Laham Cohen 2018.

(2.2). Confiscated churches and synagogues that became part of the *Res privata* could be reclaimed through the procedure of *petitiones* from which the supporters of the Catholic Church were exempted (2.3).

2.1. Confiscation of temples for illicit sacrifices or following the report of their vacantia

It has often been stressed how difficult it was to decipher Constantine's policy towards pagan cults and, in particular, towards sanctuaries.⁴⁰ We know the account of Eusebius of Caesarea according to which the holy emperor had some Levantine temples pulled down.⁴¹ In reality, the same author only mentions a few buildings located in Palestine (at Aelia Capitolina and near Hebron), in Syria-Phoenicia (at Aphaca and Heliopolis) and in Cilicia (at Aegae).⁴² Furthermore, he cites an edict of 324, which remains faithful to the spirit of tolerance of the Edict of 313 since it states: "let those who evade your obedience have temples dedicated to lying, since they want to have them".⁴³

A careful comparative analysis of the writings of Eusebius, Jerome, Sozomen, and, in the pagan camp, of Zosimus and Libanius has led historians to conclude that Constantine's policy towards the sanctuaries was limited in scope. Between the years 331 and 336, the emperor only targeted the movable properties (ornaments, statues) of the temples, ordering their inventory and their requisition.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the question of the donations made by Constantine to the churches (in Italy, Africa, Egypt, Syria, Cilicia) should be disconnected from a supposed confiscation of the temples. Their origin was diverse: they were properties confiscated from convicts or because they were *res nullius*.⁴⁵

The first cases of confiscation of temples date rather to the reign of the son of Constantine, Constantius II. The confiscation of temples was based on the fact that their officiants violated prohibitions concerning the types of sacrificial practices that were carried out there. They seem to have come as a punishment for those who practiced oracular sacrifices at night or clandestinely, which had long

⁴⁰ Belayche 2018, 209–232; Bonamente 1992/1993, 179; De Giovanni 1989, 15–104; Foschia 2000, 413–434; Sotinel 2018, 29–48.

⁴¹ Belayche 2005, 101–112.

⁴² Belayche 2018, 216.

⁴³ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine* 2.56. We can also recall, although this concerns the region of Rome, the famous rescript of Hispellum of 337 by which Constantine granted the construction of a temple "but on the express condition that care be taken that the temple consecrated to our name not be soiled by the frauds of any contagious superstition".

⁴⁴ Bonamente 1992/1993, 173–174 and 180.

⁴⁵ Bonamente 1992/1993, 175, and Delmaire 1989, 623–624.

been considered politically dangerous, as Delmaire points out.⁴⁶ Thus, the constitution of Constantius of December 1, 356 or 357 orders the closing of the temples so that “the possibility of sinning be denied to all lost men”.⁴⁷ These restrictions on the motives for sacrifices were lifted under Julian and perhaps ordered again under Valens.

From 384, during the reign of Theodosius, a great campaign of confiscations of the temples was carried out by the new praetorian prefect of the East Maternus Kynegios. According to us, the charge against their owner was precisely the clandestine accomplishment of oracular sacrifices, a prohibition that had been reiterated by Theodosius in decisions of December 21, 381 and November 30, 382.⁴⁸ A constitution addressed to Kynegios himself reiterates the prohibition of sacrifices aiming at “trying to explore the truth of present and future things”.⁴⁹

It is this charge which allowed the prefect Kynegios to proceed to the destruction, towards 386, of the monumental temple of the oracular god Zeus (assimilated to the Babylonian Bēl) in Apamea in Syria. Indeed, Libanius, who writes in 363, indicates that the city “had continued to honor Zeus whereas it was dangerous to celebrate the worship of the gods” and Theodoret of Cyrrhus specifies that “of all the bishops, Marcellus, the best in everything, was the first to use the law (*nomos*) as a weapon to destroy the temple of the city”.⁵⁰ The law Theodoret alludes to would not be a disappeared law ordering the general destruction of all the temples of the East but the laws of 381, 382, and 385 against the oracular sacrifices.

This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the testimony of Zosimus who established, in Egypt, a link between the accomplishment of sacrifices prohibited by Kynegios and the closing of the temples. Kynegios “forbade the sacrifices which had always been celebrated as well as all traditional religious ceremonies” and put the seals on the sacred enclosures.⁵¹ The general prohibition of the sacrifices would date from the years 391/392,⁵² but the destruction of the temples is still illicit in 399, except for sacrifices accomplished by the officiants.⁵³

Delmaire proposes another explanation for the destruction of the temples ordered by Kynegios. According to him, it followed the constitution of Gratian which we mentioned above.⁵⁴ Yet, as we have concluded on the basis of the testi-

46 Delmaire 2004, 319–333. See contra Cabouret 2014, 201.

47 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.4.

48 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.7–8.

49 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.9.

50 Libanius, *Letter* 1351. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.22.1. See Balty 1997, 794.

51 Zosimus, *New History* 4.37.3.

52 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.10; 11.12; 13.23.

53 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.18.

54 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.20.

mony of Ambrose of Milan, this law ordered only the confiscation of the lands whose income served for the maintenance of the temples and the clergy. However, Delmaire attributes to this text a much broader range: Gratian, he suspects, ordered the confiscation of all the temples and their annexation to the *Res privata*, a measure that was the consequence of a dissatisfaction of the population with these places of worship, which is certainly true. Delmaire also considers that this general measure – which concerned Africa and the Western provinces only – was transposed to the East by Theodosius I in a constitution which did not reach us.⁵⁵ This disappeared constitution was the legal basis for the closing of the temples of Egypt by Kynegios in 383/384. He puts forward as evidence a letter addressed to Nebridius, count of the *Res privata* (who directed this financial service in Constantinople), by Theodosius on January 18, 383.⁵⁶ This constitution ordered that the tenants (*conductores*) holding the *possessio* of domains which belonged to the goods of the cities or to temples, should automatically be given less productive ground.⁵⁷ The *Res privata* had integrated lands confiscated from the cities or temples and could decide to rent them to *conductores*. The case we encounter here is not connected with a general measure of confiscation of the temples. Indeed, the renting of goods of the temples by the *Res privata* is attested before the reign of Theodosius. In our opinion, the decision of Valentinian, which reproaches Julian with having granted to the temples the *possessio* of goods *ex patrimonio nostro per arbitrium divae memoriae Iuliani in possessionem sunt translata templorum* refers to this phenomenon. Valentinian ordered their return to the *Res privata*.⁵⁸ Later on, in Africa, we find the practice of rental contracts by the *Res privata*: on November 26, 400, the emperor Honorius gives in perpetual rental to individuals and corporations buildings, gardens, and yards of public buildings confiscated from the cities. In another decision, the same Honorius takes away from priests (of Cybele?) places which the *Res privata* had previously rented to them (*loca deputata*).⁵⁹

It thus seems that there was no general measure of confiscation of the temples in the East at the beginning of the 380s. Only a fraction of the temples may have been integrated to the *Res privata*. Libanius of Antioch may have alluded to these temples when he wrote, towards 389 to 390, that the sanctuaries are the property of the emperors and that it is therefore necessary not to destroy them

55 Delmaire 1989, 643–644.

56 *Theodosian Code* 10.3.4.

57 For an explanation of this mechanism, called *épiholé* or *adiectio steriliūm*, which required owners to mix fertile and infertile land (*Justinian Code* 11.59.1), see the explanations of Delmaire 2009, 231, n. 2.

58 *Theodosian Code* 5.13.3.

59 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.20. See Delmaire 1989, 644–645.

and reserve them for another use.⁶⁰ Delmaire's remark, according to which all the goods of the temples did not belong to the *Res privata* until 364, since the imperial constitutions ordered them to be annexed (*patrimonio quod privatum nostrum est placuit adgregari*),⁶¹ would then still be valid at the end of the 4th century. Likewise, the confiscation of "sanctuaries, temples and chapels" by decree of the magistrates (the governor or by the *rationalis* of the *Res privata*) and their transformation into churches by the apposition of the sign of the cross ordered by Theodosius II on November 14, 435 would not be a general measure.⁶² As Foschia points out, erecting "the venerable sign of the Christian church" consisted in raising or engraving one or more crosses on the building, not in building a church in place of a pagan sanctuary.⁶³

Beyond illicit sacrifices, the second legal basis for confiscating temples seems to have been the declaration of their *vacantia*. Traditionally, the *vacantia* regime was applied to abandoned or little-used places. They were places (buildings, lands) without master, *res nullius*, in the sense that they were not the property of anyone.⁶⁴

Yet, at the end of the 4th century, the chancellery of Constantinople hijacked the system for the benefit of its Christianization policy, using it for temples located in the countryside. The constitution of Arcadius of July 10, 399 to the praetorian prefect of the East Eutychianus orders: "If there are any temples in the countryside, let them be destroyed without gathering or disorder."⁶⁵ The regime of *vacantia* applied to the temples was equivocal. Indeed, Arcadius specified that these operations must be carried out "without crowd or disorder", which implies that the sites were not necessarily abandoned in fact. It should be remembered that the rural temples were an integral part of the cult and identity of the city and that they were far from being secondary.⁶⁶ Libanius condemned the attacks of the monks against the rural sanctuaries, which broke "the hope of the peasants and their taste for work, because they think that it is in vain that

60 Libanius, *Oration* 30.43.

61 *Theodosian Code* 10.1.8.

62 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.25.

63 Foschia 2000, 427.

64 *Res nullius* should not be confused with the *res nullius in bonis* mentioned above. As Thomas points out, this expression, which is falsely similar to the former, referred to a rigorously opposite regime, since it designated property which was not owned by anyone yet, but which had a patrimonial vocation that would be realized when it met its first owner. See Thomas 2002, 1447.

65 *Theodosian Code* 16.10.16.

66 Scheid 2010, 143.

they will work, deprived of the gods who led their work”.⁶⁷ Thus, it seems to us that a distinction must be made between temples that were indeed abandoned, as attested by archaeological research on certain sites, and temples whose abandonment was proclaimed for reasons of religious policy but which, in reality, continued to be active.

The ambiguity of the vacancy regime when applied to religious sites will become even more apparent for synagogues, as we shall now see.

2.2. The confiscation of synagogues for *vacantia* or illicit construction, and of churches for heretical assemblies

In our view, the constitution of October 20, 415 took advantage of the procedure of *vacantia* in a particularly vicious manner. Indeed, this constitution obliged Patriarch Gamaliel VI, whose authority over the Jewish populations of Palestine and the Diaspora was already threatened,⁶⁸ to take it upon himself to demolish the “abandoned” synagogues of Galilee: “If there is one in such a state of abandonment (*in solitudine*) that it can be demolished without the risk of a riot, let him do so.”⁶⁹

To better demonstrate the unusual character of the decision of 415, it will be useful to explain what the ordinary procedure of *vacantia* was.⁷⁰ The initiative of the procedure fell to a private individual, a *delator*, assisted by an *advocatus fisci*, who denounced a site as vacant, and *res nullius*. The informer took the matter to the court of the governor of the province so that the judge would declare the place vacant. Anyone who believed he had rights to the allegedly-vacant property could prove it and continue to occupy the premises until a final judgment was issued (an appeal was possible). Only after the final judgment could the office of the *Res privata* claim its rights to the land through the *vindicatio* procedure. The *rationalis rei privatae* then had seals placed, an inventory taken, and what had been removed or hidden claimed.

However, the law of October 20, 415 forced Gamaliel to play at the same time the role of *delator* and of the governor of province, obliging him to be judge and jury. Constantinople had several reasons for doing so. It was both to punish him (because he had judged Christians before the Sanhedrin and had non-Jews circumcised) and to test the loyalty of this high Roman dignitary (Gamaliel was

⁶⁷ Cabouret 2014, 199. Jones emphasizes that it was easier to destroy temples in the countryside than those in the cities, but that this policy was carried out with caution. Jones 1963, 22–23.

⁶⁸ Irshai 2005, 20–27.

⁶⁹ *Theodosian Code* 16.8.22.

⁷⁰ Provera 1964, and Delmaire 1989, 597–610.

a senator).⁷¹ Theodosius II ordered the demolition of the synagogues if this could be done “without [risks of] sedition”. By having this intermediary bear the responsibility for the destruction, a direct confrontation with the Jews of Galilee could be avoided.

In the same constitution of 415, Constantinople forbade for the future the building of new synagogues (*deinceps nullas condi faciat synagogas*). A constitution of February 15, 423 reiterated the prohibition of building synagogues, adding the prohibition of repairing old buildings (*Synagogæ de cetero nullæ protinus extruantur, veteres in sua forma permaneant*),⁷² and just after the publication of the *Theodosian Code*, its author, the praetorian prefect of the East Martyrius, again recalled the prohibition of creating new synagogues.⁷³ As we know, even if these constitutions did not dissuade the Jews of the Eastern provinces from building monumental synagogues in the 5th century, they were no less dangerous because they provided a legal basis for their destruction.⁷⁴ The threat was real, for reasons we shall explain below.

As for Christian places, if they were found to host “heretical” assemblies, their owner was subject to confiscation of his property. The constitutions seem to refer to investigations suggesting that the decisions were taken after a trial. Thus, in 396 (or 402), Arcadius ordered the confiscation of all the places of the heretics of Constantinople: “both those which they possess as churches and those called diaconal or decanic and those which, in houses or places belonging to individuals, could be used for the holding of similar religions: these buildings and private places must be incorporated into our tax system”.⁷⁵ In 415, Theodosius II targeted the buildings of the Montanists, planning to reallocate them to the Orthodox Christians. The owners were stripped of “the places that had been used by [the Montanists] for the celebration of forbidden assemblies ... whether it was a house or an estate (*sive domus sive possessio*). If there were still some buildings belonging to them – which should not be called churches but haunts of wild beasts – let them be awarded with their donation to the venerable churches of the Orthodox sect”;⁷⁶ the same decision orders the confiscation for the benefit of the Aerarium of the properties which had hosted Eunomians, in Constantinople or in the countryside.⁷⁷ In 428, the owners having accommodat-

71 Roland Delmaire is wrong to consider that it was a matter of authorizing the patriarch to destroy abandoned synagogues in order to remove the temptation for Christians to annex them. It was indeed a constraint imposed on the patriarch, as demonstrated by the punitive and vexatious tone of the law of 415. Delmaire 2005, 403, n. 6.

72 *Theodosian Code* 16.8.25.

73 Theodosius, *Novels* 3.

74 Laham Cohen 2018, 64–67.

75 *Theodosian Code* 16.5.30.

76 *Theodosian Code* 16.5.57.

77 *Theodosian Code* 16.5.58.

ed heretics (the law provides a long list) are struck by the confiscation of their property to the profit of the Catholic church. The decision specifies that some of these heretical churches had been taken from the Orthodox.⁷⁸ Finally, on August 3, 435, following the condemnation of Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus, those who had provided places of assembly (in Constantinople?) “in houses or in a villa or in a house in the suburbs or in any other place whatsoever” were punished with the confiscation of their property.⁷⁹

2.3. A derogation procedure to facilitate the transfer of heretical churches and synagogues to Orthodox Christians

The above-mentioned constitutions show that the sentences of confiscation, which targeted the private dwellings as well as the churches of the heretics (especially in the city of Constantinople), ordered their transfer to the Orthodox Christians. The constitutions of 415 and 428 designated them directly as beneficiaries.⁸⁰

By instituting an automatic transfer procedure, these laws derogated from the usual procedure since they exempted the Orthodox Christians from the obligation to go through the procedure of the *petitio*: according to this procedure, the properties incorporated into the *Res privata* were *res fiscales* which could be petitioned by private individuals (or cities). For reasons that one can imagine, the legislator had prohibited the *delatores* who had initiated the procedures of confiscation from petitioning these same goods. By exempting Orthodox Christians from the *petitio*, the law circumvented this prohibition. It encouraged the *delatio* of heresy, by involving the ecclesiastics in its application in a very concrete and material way, guaranteeing them the benefit of the confiscations.

In the same spirit, the prohibition, in 415, of building new synagogues and repairing old ones opened, from 438 onwards, legal avenues for Orthodox Christians, who could denounce illicit constructions and hope to obtain donations from the *Res privata* without going through the procedure of the *petitio*: “let him who has built a synagogue know that he has ploughed for the benefit of the Catholic Church”.⁸¹ Here again, the derogation procedure could only encourage Orthodox Christians to actively seek out possible new synagogue constructions and to denounce them through the *delatio fiscali*.

In contrast, as far as the temples were concerned, the transfer operations came up against major legal obstacles. Unlike other the properties incorporated

⁷⁸ *Theodosian Code* 16.5.65.

⁷⁹ *Theodosian Code* 16.5.66. In the West the Donatist and Manichean churches suffered the same fate.

⁸⁰ *Theodosian Code* 16.5.57 and 65.

⁸¹ Theodosius, *Novels* 3.

into the *Res privata*, the temples were subject to the *ius templorum* and it was forbidden to petition them on pain of sacrilege.⁸² Admittedly, as Delmaire notes, this prohibition was not always respected. A constitution addressed by Arcadius to Caesarius, praetorian prefect of the East, alludes to lands of the *Res privata* which were subject to the *ius templorum* but had nevertheless been leased to *conductores* after the lease had been auctioned.⁸³ A decision of Theodosius II confirms this interpretation.⁸⁴ Yet, as we can see, these exceptions did not benefit to the Orthodox Christians.

3. Conclusion

The post-classical Roman law known through the imperial constitutions preserved in the Theodosian Code (438–439) still recognized for temples the status of inalienability of *res nullius in bonis*. This is proven by a lost constitution of Constantine which is confirmed by a decision of Honorius and Arcadius of November 6, 405 (*Theodosian Code* 10.10.24). The temples which had been incorporated into the *Res privata* thus always constituted a category that was clearly separated, from the legal and financial point of view, from the other properties of the *Aerarium*, making them come under the *ius templorum*. The *summa divisio* of classical law, which removed the *res sacrae* from the world of commerce and exchange and placed them outside of any private patrimony, thus seems to have resisted Christianization.

Contrary to what may have been said, no general law ordered the general closing of the temples in the East during this period. The destruction of temples in Egypt and Syria ordered by the praetorian prefect Kynegios came in application of the laws enacted by Constantius and confirmed by Theodosius I against illicit pagan practices. The law of 435 did not have either the general application which one attributed to it, because it was a matter of affixing the sign of the cross on the pagan sites, not of rebuilding churches there.

Unlike the temples, the churches and synagogues belonged to the circuit of private property and exchange. From the time of Constantine and his sons, the churches obtained numerous *privilegia rebus* while the synagogues obtained only one, the exemption from forced requisitions (*metatum*). At the beginning of the 5th century, the law recognized that the churches had characteristics that brought them closer to pagan sanctuaries, encompassing under the head of *sacrilegium*

⁸² *Theodosian Code* 10.10.24 and 32.

⁸³ *Justinian Code* 11.70.4. See Delmaire 2009, 423, n. 6 and 551–555. We do not include the constitution of Honorius of August 30, 415 because, as mentioned above, it seems to concern the goods assigned to the income of the temples and not those having the status of *res sacrae* (*Theodosian Code* 16.10.20).

⁸⁴ *Theodosian Code* 11.20.6.

any attack against them, and assimilating them to places of asylum. Attacks on synagogues, on the other hand, were punished in the same way as attacks on any other private property. They did not enjoy any kind of protective status.

The weakening of the legal status of the synagogues stems from a constitution of 415 complemented by three laws of 423 and by novelle 3 of 438. The law of 415 circumvented the classic *vacantia* procedure, obliging the patriarch Gamaliel to order the confiscation of allegedly-abandoned synagogues in Galilee. Similarly, the interdiction to build new synagogues and to repair old ones opened up legal avenues for *delatores*, who could denounce illicit constructions and hope, via the *petitio* procedure, to take possession of them. Orthodox Christians did not even need to go through this procedure thanks to a law of 438 which gave them preference. The same procedure of automatic devolution of private houses and churches belonging to heretics allowed the Orthodox to take possession of these places.

As can be seen, Constantinople had put in place derogatory procedures during the first decades of the 5th century, which encouraged Orthodox Christians to actively seek out and denounce heretics as well as the illicit construction of synagogues. The laws of automatic transfer involved the Christians in a very concrete and material way by giving them the hope of benefiting from the confiscations. However, it remains difficult to measure the extent to which the phenomenon of forced transfer of Jewish and heretical places of worship to the Orthodox took place in practice. This question can only be given a concrete answer through the study of the archaeological evidence.

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The (Non-)Sharing of Religious Sites in the Greek Canonical Sources of the 4th Century

Mantè Lenkaitytė Ostermann

The present chapter explores the occurrences of sharing and non-sharing of religious sites in the Greek canonical sources of the 4th century. Contrary to imperial legislation, the ecclesiastical legislation has still received very little scholarly attention.¹ The regulations pertaining to religious sites are found in the canons coming from four councils: those of Ancyra (314), of Antioch (ca. 328), of Gangra (ca. 340–342), and of Laodicea (between 360 and 380). The canons of the Councils of Nicaea (325, called by Constantine) and Constantinople (381, called by Theodosius I) do not say anything about problematic site sharing. Among the Greek councils of later centuries, one should mention the canons of the Council of Chalcedon (451), where religious buildings appear in relation to their legal status: all religious foundations and buildings, in particular monasteries and chapels, are subjected to episcopal control.² In public law, decrees against heretics and their places of meeting are known since Constantine, but it is under Theodosius I that regulations governing the control of buildings related to heretical groups became extensively numerous.³

The church councils of the 4th century, both in the East and the West, have produced the earliest known conciliar legislation containing disciplinary decisions.⁴ These conciliar decrees, called canons, govern different aspects of Christian life, including conduct, discipline, penitence, organization, and worship. The conciliar legislation has only reached us through later canonical collections that have undergone redactional processes, and no canonical corpus of any particular council has been transmitted through an independent manuscript tradition. Nevertheless, both the variety itself of canonical corpora, and the variety of

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1 While Latin councils have received more attention (cf. *I concili* 2002), the Greek material has been up to now reserved to specialists of canon law who are mainly interested in questions related to sacramental validity and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but not to social contexts.

2 See canons 4 and 8. On the context of these canons aiming at reducing the influence of urban monks in Constantinople, see Dagron 1970; cf. Barone Adesi 1990, 323–339.

3 See Noethlichs 1971; Buenacasa Pérez 2008; Escribano Paño 2019.

4 On the development of ecclesiastical law, see Hess 2002; cf. Wessel 2012.

problematics and terminology proper to each council, testify to the different contexts in which these canons were produced.⁵ Unlike polemical treatises, the type of discourse encountered in these canons was normative and exclusively applied to the members of specific communities. Although the extent of the immediate application of canons is mostly unknown to us, the norms of behaviour as represented by canonical regulations provide us with a certain picture of Christian social life, its ideals and failures in particular times and circumstances.⁶

Ancient canonical sources provide no definition of what could have been perceived as a “religious site”. However, the documents themselves originate from religious authority – conciliar assemblies held by bishops and their clerics – and aim at a particular religious (Christian) community. Therefore, the sites and places that are mentioned in the canons are in themselves of a religious nature from the point of view of ecclesiastical legislators. As we shall see, the religious character of such places may vary in importance and be found in various contexts ranging from a pagan site where sacrifices are offered, a tomb of a martyr venerated by heretics, shared festal practices at (supposedly) shared places, to sectarian liturgies in domestic spaces. The canons also refer to places that are secular in character (they have no religious purpose) but are viewed as dangerous to Christian morals, such as taverns or baths. On the whole, the canons speak *against* any sharing of sites and thus attest to the intention of ecclesiastical legislators to define religious and social boundaries. At the same time, however, they indirectly testify to different modes and occasions of the actual sharing.

In what follows, I will thus try to distinguish what sort of sites and places are perceived by ecclesiastical legislators as places of sharing or non-sharing. In the first part pagan and Jewish sites will be discussed, while the second part will be dedicated to the Christian ones. Since the canons are much concerned about the differentiation between “houses of God” and simply “houses” as places of Christian worship, the second part will include a few reflections on the status of domestic spaces and churches in the 4th century.

1. Pagan and Jewish sites

1.1. Council of Ancyra (314): sacrificial meals at pagan sites

One large group of Greek canons, all coming from the Council of Ancyra (the first for which canons are conserved) dated to around 314,⁷ deals with the rein-

⁵ Cf. Lenkaitytė Ostermann 2020–2021.

⁶ Gaudemet 1985, 103.

⁷ On the council of Ancyra, see Ohme 2012, 39–41. The canons of Ancyra are edited by Joannou 1962, 56–73. English translations throughout this chapter are adapted from Percival 1956 (canons of Ancyra: 63–72) and Cummings 1957 (canons of Ancyra: 489–503).

tegration of those who had been compelled to participate in sacrifices or sacrificial banquets during the last persecution of Christians.⁸ While all the situations described in the ten canons dedicated to those who sacrificed (canons 1 to 9 and canon 12) may be interpreted as related to the general idea that Christians have accomplished a pagan ritual in a (presumably) pagan site, some canons emphasize the actual fact of sharing.

Thus, the canons 4 and 5 are devoted to those who, apart from participating in a pagan sacrifice, have in addition “partaken of meals in places with idols (τῶν δειπνησάντων εἰς τὰ εἰδωλεῖα)” (canon 4).⁹ Among these people, two attitudes are differentiated. Some “partook of the prepared meal indifferently (μετέσχον τοῦ παρασκευασθέντος δείπνου ἀδιαφόρως)” and even “wore luxurious clothes” (canon 4), while others “went up with clothes of mourning, and upon reclining ate (ἀναπεσόντες ἔφαγον) in the meantime weeping throughout the time they were reclining (μεταξὺ δι’ ὅλης τῆς ἀνακλίσεως)”; among those who wept, there were also some who refused to eat (μὴ ἔφαγον) (canon 5). The degree and duration of the penitence for each of the three cases varies according to the perceived gravity of the transgression (either six, five or four years of penitence).

A much shorter period of penitence (two years) is commanded to those “who partook in meals at a pagan festival or in a place appointed for pagans (τῶν συνεστιαθέντων ἐν ἑορτῇ ἐθνικῇ, ἢ ἐν τόπῳ ἀφωρισμένῳ τοῖς ἐθνικοῖς),”¹⁰ but “brought and ate their own food (ἴδια βρώματα ἐπικομισαμένων καὶ φαγόντων)” (canon 7).

These three canons (4, 5, and 7) of the Council of Ancyra, composed in the context of the last persecutions against Christians,¹¹ are the only ones among the Greek canons where a pagan place of cult is mentioned, and in all of them the “pagan” place is associated to shared meals. The vocabulary of the canons refers to dinner (δείπνον, δειπνέω), reclining at dinner (ἀναπίπτω, ἀνάκλις), eating

⁸ Although not targeted at Christians, it was the decree of Decius (249/250) which for the first time required all inhabitants of the Empire (although probably excluding Jews) to participate in an animal sacrifice. Decius’ measure was revived by Diocletian and his associates at the beginning of the 4th century “within the context of an explicitly anti-Christian campaign” (Rives 2020, 201). See also Rebillard 2013b, 131–133. On the canons of Ancyra related to persecution, see Lenkaitytė Ostermann 2020–2021, 85–91.

⁹ The term εἰδωλεῖον, usually translated as “idol’s temple”, appears first in the Septuagint under the form “εἰδῶλιον” (cf. *Daniel* 1:2; *1 Maccabees* 1:47). It was taken over by Paul (*1 Corinthians* 8:10), who uses the form “εἰδωλεῖον” (*idolium* in Latin), and further on by Christian authors.

¹⁰ To my knowledge, this is the only occurrence of the expression ἑορτῇ ἐθνικῇ in Antiquity; one finds instead τῶν ἐθνῶν ἑορτῇ (Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.23; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Martyrs of Palestine* 3.2; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.6.1).

¹¹ The context of persecution of the canon 7 is not noticed by Graf 2015, 152.

(ἐσθίω, συνεσθίω), and food (βρώματα), pointing to the ancient practice of formal meals, or banquets.¹² The canons are thus dealing with the cases when Christians have consumed sacrificial meat at a sacrificial meal, or have tried to avoid eating sacrificial meat by bringing their own food.¹³ Indeed, it is not so much the entering of “a place with idols” (εἰδωλεῖον) or “a place dedicated to pagans” (τόπος ἀφωρισμένος τοῖς ἔθνικοῖς) that is regarded as a sin, but the eating of sacrificial meat, considered to be consecrated to idols. Nevertheless, the close presence of a pagan site where sacrifice has just taken place is an aggravating factor for ecclesiastical legislators.

1.2. Council of Laodicea (360/380): shared festivals in public spaces

In the rest of the canons of the 4th century the bans against mixing with pagans are never explicitly associated to pagan sites as such, although the latter may be suggested implicitly. For instance, one canon from the Council of Laodicea in *Phrygia Pacatiana*, dated to between 360 and 380 and affiliated to one of the numerous anti-Nicene groups of the 4th century,¹⁴ forbids “to celebrate together with the pagans and share in their godlessness (Ἕλλησι συνεορτάζειν καὶ κοινωνεῖν τῇ ἀθεότητι αὐτῶν)” (canon 39). No place is mentioned, and unlike in the canons of Ancyra discussed above, there is no mention of sacrifice. On the basis of religious grounds (“godlessness” of the pagans), the canon targets shared social behavior during festivals in order to draw boundaries between Christians and the “others”.¹⁵ It implies that Christians should not visit spaces where such “pagan” festivals take place.

Similarly, two other canons of the same Council of Laodicea refer to shared festal practices with Jews and heretics. One should not “receive paschal gifts (τὰ ἑορταστικά)¹⁶ sent by Jews or heretics, nor celebrate together with them (συνεορ-

¹² Cf. Smith 2003.

¹³ See Smith 2003, 67–79, on sacrificial banquets, and Rebillard 2013b for Christian attitudes towards sacrificial meat.

¹⁴ The date and the historical context of the council of Laodicea are difficult to reconstruct, see Ohme 2012, 47–49; Mardirossian 2010, 117–132. On its canons related to religious groups, see Lenkaitytė Ostermann 2020–2021, 104–112. For the edition of the canons, see Joannou 1962, 130–155, and for the English translation, see Percival 1956, 125–159; Cummings 1957, 552–577.

¹⁵ See Belayche 2007 on the tension between public festivals as occasions for a social *koinōnia* on the one hand, and as places for rivalry between religious identities on the other.

¹⁶ On ἑορταστικός in the sense of “paschal”, and τὰ ἑορταστικά as “paschal gifts”, see Lampe 1961, 504. On the custom of gift-exchange during festivals in all religious traditions, see Stuiber 1978. Stuiber 1978, 689, and Attali 2017, 380, n. 19, propose to interpret these gifts in the context of the festival of Purim.

τάζειν αὐτοῖς)” (canon 37), nor “receive unleavened bread (ἄζυμα) from the Jews, nor be partakers of their impiety (κοινωνεῖν ταῖς ἀσεβείαις αὐτῶν)” (canon 38).¹⁷ No particular place is mentioned, but, once again, common celebrations presuppose the sharing of a place. Interesting is also the way in which taking part in blamable practices is in both cases treated as a religious offense, “sharing in godlessness” of pagans and “sharing in impiety” of Jews.¹⁸ The effect is still reinforced through the use of the verb also employed for eucharistic communion, κοινωνέω, to describe the actions of those who, in a way, betray the Christian sacrament.

These three canons (37, 38, and 39) of Laodicea, located at the end of a larger section dedicated to the relations with pagans, Jews, and heretics (canons 29 to 39), are all directed against shared practices in religious festivals other than those of the very group that claims authority by issuing the canons. All these festivals of “the others” that attract Christians were probably public events. Indeed, the Greek term ἑορτή and its derivatives, which appear in the Laodicean canons, were widely used to designate annual festivals and celebrations in all religious traditions in the Roman empire, be it pagan, Jew or Christian.¹⁹ Thus, a celebration “with the pagans” (canon 39) can refer to a festival (or festivals) included in the official calendar of a province or a town. This may also be suggested by the choice of the term Ἕλληνες (instead of ἔθνη) to designate “non-Christians” in this canon,²⁰ as it points to the role of Greek language and culture in sustaining traditional cults and festivals in the Eastern part of the empire.²¹ These festivals, whether they be local or empire-wide events, were supported by imperial politics and still flourished all over the Roman East in Late Antiquity despite the critics of bishops.²²

17 A similar decree appears in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.47.70 (= *Canons of the Apostles* 70) which forbid to fast or celebrate with the Jews (νηστεύοι μετὰ Ἰουδαίων, ἢ εορτάζοι μετ’ αὐτῶν), or to accept from them their festival gifts, such as unleavened bread (τὰ τῆς εορτῆς ξένια, οἶον ἄζυμα ἢ τι τοιοῦτον).

18 For a double exclusion of Jewish and pagan festivals in Christian preaching, see Harl 1981, 126–127, who refers to Gregory of Nazianzus’ *Oration* 11.6 and 41.1. The latter passage draws an opposition between, one side, the celebrations of the Jews “according to the letter” and the celebrations of the Greeks “according to the body”, and, on the other, the Christian celebration “according to the Spirit” (Ἐορτάζει καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ γράμμα [...]. Ἐορτάζει καὶ Ἕλλην, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα, καὶ τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ θεοῦ τε καὶ δαίμονας [...]. Ἐορτάζομεν καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀλλ’ ὡς δοκεῖ τῷ Πνεύματι).

19 See Attali 2017, 8 and 344, on the term ἑορτή as designating legal Jewish festivals; see also note 10 above.

20 The term ἔθνη occurs in the canon 30 of Laodicea, see note 28 below; on the use of these terms in the Greek canons, see Lenkaitytė Ostermann 2020–2021, 90–91 and 110.

21 Cf. Bowersock 1990, 1–40; Graf 2015, 50–51, 58–60.

22 See Graf 2015, 103–162; Belayche 2007. For Christian attitudes and episcopal opposition, see Harl 1981.

Similarly, common celebrations with “Jews or heretics” (canon 37, where “heretics” could also be understood as “judaizers”),²³ and the gifts shared with them, especially those of unleavened bread (canon 38), point to the festival of Pesach (Passover), one of the main annual Jewish festivals of the Torah.²⁴ The Jewish origins of Christian Easter, its date, and significance could easily provide occasions for common celebrations, as attested in numerous sources.²⁵ For us it is important to note that the festivals mentioned in all the three canons are public events and therefore celebrated in public spaces, like Roman cult places, or places to which everyone had access, like synagogues.²⁶ Thus, although the aim of the ecclesiastical legislators is primarily to delimit the boundaries of the Christian community by prohibiting social proximity, the three canons of Laodicea more specifically target the occasions provided by traditional cults, or major festivals in the case of Jews, and celebrated in spaces accessible to all members of the civic community.

One should also mention here the few canons referring to places of no particular religious character, such as private houses or public places of ill-repute. For instance, the canon 24 of the Council of Ancyra, directed against the practices of magic, mentions the case of bringing a person suspected of practicing divination “to one’s own house (εἰς τοὺς ἑαυτῶν οἶκους) in order to detect sorceries or with a view to purification (ἐπὶ ἀνερευνησεί φαρμακείων καὶ καθάρσει).”²⁷ Finally, two canons of Laodicea forbid visits to certain places of ill-repute, such as taverns (καπηλεῖον, canon 24) and baths shared with women (ἐν βάλανειῷ μετὰ γυναικῶν, canon 30).²⁸ The two canons of Laodicea most specifically concern the clergy and ascetics. Their regulations can therefore be better understood as trying to avert the potential moral danger that such places repre-

23 I.e., those who follow Jewish customs. “Judaizers” are mentioned in the canon 29 of Laodicea as those who respect the resting of the Sabbath, cf. Lenkaitytė Ostermann 2020–2021, 108–109.

24 Cf. Tabory 2006. The unleavened bread (*Mazzah*) festival was a seven-day celebration following Passover. For the rites of Pesach, see Attali 2017, 185–187.

25 See Bradshaw 1999 for the origins of Christian Easter in the Jewish Passover festivities; Simon 1948, 361–373, on Christian attempts to avoid any assimilations to Jewish Pascha; and Kinzig 2011, 141–147 (with an extensive list of sources) on the affinities felt by Christians to Jewish rituals and festivals.

26 For the visibility of Jewish celebrations in public spaces, see Attali 2017, 342–351. Antioch offers a well-documented case of the interactions between various religious festivals pertaining to different cults taking place in one and the same city (Soler 2006).

27 See Cummings 1957, 503, and Fischer, Lumpe 1997, 486, for the right interpretation of this canon.

28 According to the canon 30, public bath shared with women is the first thing condemned by pagans, cf. Lenkaitytė Ostermann 2020–2021, 110.

sent²⁹ rather than really alluding to their association with the “demonic” character attributed to such places by Christian moralists.³⁰

2. Christian places

The largest part of the canons related to sites are dedicated to Christian places of cult or worship, and more exactly to problematic cases when a part of the Christian assembly either avoids official church buildings and liturgy, or/and creates alternative places of worship. Both aspects are interrelated and may appear in one and the same canon. The main concern of the canons is, however, the sectarian assemblies held either in churches belonging to opposite groups or at private households.

2.1. Council of Antioch (ca. 328) and liturgies in domestic spaces

The “Eusebian” (“Arian”) Council of Antioch that met around 328³¹ is the first to have produced regulations concerning the liturgical use of churches and private houses.³² The council, encouraged by Constantine and presided by Eusebius of Caesarea, deposed the pro-Nicene bishop of Antioch Eustathius and so initiated the Antiochene schism which lasted until 379. The 25 canons produced by the council mostly focus on relations between deacons, priests, and bishops, and must therefore be read in the context of “the confusion provoked by the succession of Eustathius”.³³ Indeed, several competing Christian communities henceforth co-existed for more than fifty years in one of the most important imperial cities.³⁴

The canon 2 of the Council of Antioch contains two parts: the first condemns those who avoid the official eucharist celebrations, while the second is directed against sectarian liturgies. The beginning of the canon 2 excommunicates those who “enter the church of God (τοὺς εἰσιόντας εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ)” but leave it either after the readings of the Scriptures or after prayers, and

29 Equally, the clergy should not watch plays staged at weddings or banquets (canon 54), nor should a Christian dance at weddings (canon 53).

30 Such association is for example explicit in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.62.4.

31 On the date, circumstances, and attribution of the canons of Antioch to this particular council, see Mardrossian 2010, 89–91, and Ohme 2012, 44–47. Edition: Joannou 1962, 102–126; English translation: Percival 1956, 108–121; Cummings 1957, 406–419.

32 The canons of Antioch have been ignored by many of those who have studied heretical private places, probably because they never explicitly use the vocabulary relating to heretics; an exception is Perrin 2010, 207, n. 19.

33 Simonetti 2014, 153.

34 Shepardson 2014, 11–19 gives an overview of the Antiochene schism.

do not take part in the eucharist. This disposition may be directed against the supporters of the deposed Eustathius who, expelled from their churches, came to listen to the Scriptures without mixing with the other participants of the liturgy.³⁵

In the second part, the canon continues by saying that it is not allowed “to enter houses (οἶκος) and pray with those who do not pray in the church (συνεῦχεσθαι τοῖς μὴ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ συνευχομένοις); or to receive in one church (ἐν ἑτέρᾳ ἐκκλησίᾳ) those who do not assemble in another church (τοὺς ἐν ἑτέρᾳ ἐκκλησίᾳ μὴ συναγομένους)”. Here, the canon probably aims at preventing the faithful from joining prayers at the houses of the Eustathians and forbids the clerics (mentioned shortly afterwards) to receive into their church the faithful who are known to have avoided other churches of the city, sign of their sectarian behavior.³⁶ The expression “the church of God” (ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ), which appears in the opening sentence of the canon 2, is the only one in the canons of Antioch that clearly refers to a building. The occurrences of the word ἐκκλησία alone in this canon can be interpreted both in the sense of a building and of a community. Elsewhere, ἐκκλησία means church as an institution.³⁷

The canon 5 of the same council threatens with deposition a presbyter or a deacon who “has separated himself from the church (ἀφώρισεν ἑαυτὸν τῆς ἐκκλησίας), and gathered an assembly of his own (ἰδίᾳ συνήγαγε), and set up an altar (θυσιαστήριον ἔστησε)”.³⁸ If the person persists in “troubling and disturbing the church”, he will be considered as seditious and corrected “by secular power (διὰ τῆς ἕξωθεν ἐξουσίας)”. The canon does not envisage a “separatist” church building but instead speaks of a separate altar, evoking a possibility that a presbyter assembles his faithful in a space other than an official church and celebrates the eucharist at a portable altar.³⁹ The expression “set up an altar (θυσιαστήριον ἔστησε)” comes from the Greek Old Testament⁴⁰ where it can designate

35 See Mardirossian 2010, 93.

36 I.e., the canon may sanction the Eusebian clerics who wanted to stay in communion with the pro-Nicenes, Mardirossian 2010, 93.

37 Ἐκκλησία as institutional church appears in the canon 5 discussed below and in the canons 24 and 25 decreeing on the administration of the church property and funds.

38 A very similar decree is found in the *Apostolic constitutions* 8.47.31 (= *Canons of the Apostles* 31): Εἴ τις πρεσβύτερος [...] χωρὶς συναγάγῃ, καὶ θυσιαστήριον ἕτερον πῆξῃ. For canonico-juridical implications of the canon 5 of Antioch, see Mardirossian 2010, 185–187.

39 See Braun 1924, 48–75, and Duval 2005, 13, on portable altars in the ancient Church and their gradual replacement by fixed altars (at the end of the 4th century in Africa, but only in the 6th century in *Arabia* and *Palaestina III*). There are no archaeological traces of portable altars in Antiquity. The texts suggest that they were wooden tables or boards, Palazzo 2008, 74–78.

40 The Christian Greek has adopted two words for Christian altar, θυσιαστήριον (taken over from the Septuagint where it also designates the sacrificial altars of the Temple of Jerusalem) and τράπεζα, while reserving βωμός to pagan altars (Braun 1924, 21–32). The distinc-

the erection of an altar to the God of Israel (cf. *Genesis* 33:20), but also to foreign gods who “make Israel to sin” (cf. *3 Kings* 16:32). Our canon bears this last negative connotation when it mentions an altar erected by schismatics.⁴¹

Therefore, the canons of Antioch envisage situations where some part of the faithful avoid liturgical celebrations (or the eucharistic part of them) at official church buildings, gather for prayers in private households, attend services in one church while avoiding another, while some clerics gather separate meetings for eucharistic celebrations outside the churches. The appeal to secular intervention in the case of a continuing conflict (canon 5) is unique in the canons of the 4th century. In the years following the beginning of the Antiochene schism an intensive competition took place between the rival bishops (and their communities) over the control of the city’s churches,⁴² while the losing camp was expelled either to private houses or outside the city.⁴³

This situation in Antioch was not unique. Indeed, the end of the Diocletian persecution in the 310s inaugurated a “thriving building activity” of Christian churches which immediately “triggered a struggle among different Christian groups for the control of the buildings that had just been constructed and which were intended for liturgical assembly”.⁴⁴ The 4th century is characterized by an extremely agitated dogmatic development, involving both Church and imperial politics. The dominance of one ecclesial party in a precise town or region would signify the exclusion of its opponents who had to resort to private venues, a situation that could be reversed some months or years later when political or ecclesiastical circumstances changed.⁴⁵ Households could be used not only for liturgical

tion between θυσιαστήριον and βωμός comes from Hellenistic Judaism. For the semantic difference in the Christian usage between, on the one hand, θυσιαστήριον (corresponding to *altare* in Latin) as an altar of offerings (of the sacrifice of Christ, of martyrs and of Christians) and, on the other hand, τράπεζα (*mensa* in Latin) as the table of the Lord’s supper, see Weckwerth 1963. See also Lampe 1961, 660.

41 For the same *topos*, cf. Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church* 17 (*contemptis episcopis et dei sacerdotibus derelictis constituere audet aliud altare*); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 26.18 (θυσιαστηριῶ θυσιαστήριον ἀντηγεῖρατε); Augustine, *Against Cresconius* 2.2 (*altare contra altare erigere*). See also note 38 above.

42 See Shepardson 2014, 19–26 and 50–57.

43 During his visit to Antioch in 346, Athanasius found the Antiochene followers of Eustathius gathering in private houses (ἐν ἰδιωτῶν οἰκίαις ἐκκλησιάζων, Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.20.5); the followers of Meletius (expelled from Antioch ca. 365–369) had to meet on the bank of the Orontes River or in the *campus martius* (Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria* 2.15); see Shepardson 2014, 24 and 53.

44 Perrin 2010, 213.

45 Thus Farag 2021, 2, argues that “disputes commonly considered theological in nature had as much to do with the control and administration of ecclesial property as they did with knowledge of God”. See also Buenacasa Pérez 2008.

celebrations of schismatic groups but also as means for spreading their ideas, winning adherents, and networking.⁴⁶

Harry Maier has shown convincingly “the role of households in the survival and promotion of officially rejected expressions of Christian faith, and thus their place in a topography of heresy”.⁴⁷ One should remember, however, that domestic space was the original place for Christian meetings and liturgical assemblies since the beginning.⁴⁸ Church buildings, either open to the public or founded on private estates that could contain larger crowds, only appeared gradually.⁴⁹ In spite of numerous new church buildings, meetings in private houses for prayers, worship, and rituals continued and are attested well into the 4th and 5th centuries, and not only for schismatic groups.⁵⁰ The separate celebrations presented as sectarian in the canons of Antioch are therefore conform to an old Christian practice of meeting in domestic space, while the position of the legislators condemning such practice can be interpreted as a sign of the growing episcopal interest to confine the worship in more controllable church buildings. This leads to the question of how churches as buildings were perceived in the 4th century. In order to examine it, we now turn to the Councils of Gangra and Laodicea and to their canons.

2.2. Councils of Gangra (ca. 340–342) and Laodicea (360/380) and the legitimate places of worship

The Council of Gangra (capital of *Paphlagonia*) took place some ten years after the Council of Antioch, i. e., ca. 340–342. Directed against the rigorist and sectarian practices of the ascetic followers of Eustathius of Sebaste (not to be confused with Eustathius of Antioch), it has issued a synodical letter and 20 canons, several of which refer to places of worship.⁵¹ The care with which the ecclesiastical legislators of Gangra demarcate the unacceptable practices is similar to that expressed in the canons of the Council of Laodicea (360/380) already mentioned

⁴⁶ See Maier 1995; 2005.

⁴⁷ Maier 2005, 214.

⁴⁸ Bremmer 2020, 57–58, takes care to distinguish between three types of places: “places where a congregation met regularly, places where a congregation met incidentally, and places where Christians met for non-liturgical purposes”.

⁴⁹ On this development, see White 1990a and 1990b. See Bowes 2008, 125–188, on Christian places of cult on rural estates, and Thomas 1987, 5–36, on private churches.

⁵⁰ Bowes 2008 and Sfameni 2019 have emphasized the public character of a Late Antique house and argued against assuming that houses were necessarily heretical refuges.

⁵¹ On the council of Gangra, see Ohme 2012, 42–44. Edition: Joannou 1962, 85–99; English translation: Percival 1956, 91–101; Cummings 1957, 523–531. On religious terminology at Gangra, see Lenkaitytė Ostermann 2020–2021, 100–104.

above (see 1.2), which demonstrates a particular concern for establishing boundaries against heretics.

Both councils mention places of martyr cult, something that has not appeared in the earlier canons. Moreover, Laodicea alludes to competing martyr shrines.⁵² For example, the canon 20 of Gangra denounces those who “condemn and abhor the assemblies [held in honor] of the martyrs (τὰς συνάξεις τῶν μαρτύρων), or the services (τὰς λειτουργίας) performed there, and the commemorations (τὰς μνήμας) of them”. The situation described in the canon does not refer to any particular building, mentioning only the assemblies held in the memory of martyrs. Most probably, these assemblies took place at a martyr’s tomb or in a martyr shrine, as is also suggested by two canons of Laodicea. The latter are also more explicit regarding the ongoing intra-Christian competition between the places of martyr cult. The legislators of Laodicea decree that “those of the church are not allowed to meet at the tombs (συγχωρεῖν εἰς τὰ κοιμητήρια),⁵³ nor attend the so-called martyrries (τὰ λεγόμενα μαρτύρια) of any of the heretics, for prayer or worship (εὐχῆς ἢ θεραπείας ἕνεκα)”⁵⁴ (canon 9); the canon 34 is less explicit regarding the place: “No Christian shall forsake the martyrs of Christ (μάρτυρας Χριστοῦ), and go away to false martyrs, that is, to those of the heretics (τοὺς ψευδομάρτυρας τοῦτ’ ἔστιν αἰρετικῶν)”⁵⁵

Several canons of Gangra and Laodicea evoke private spaces used for assemblies in order to condemn those who avoid official liturgical assemblies.⁵⁶ The canon 5 of Gangra pronounces an anathema against those who despise “the house of God (τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ) and the assemblies (τὰς συνάξεις) held therein”, while the canon 6 is composed against anyone who “holds private assemblies outside of the church (παρὰ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἰδίᾳ ἐκκλησιάζου), and, despising the church, wishes to perform the functions of the church (τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας

52 On the rise of spiritual power as well as political and social control provided by martyr cult in the 4th century, see Morehouse 2016.

53 For κοιμητήριον meaning a tomb (a synonym of μαρτύριον) and not a cemetery, see Rebillard 2013a, 255–257.

54 The word θεραπεία can mean either worship or healing; the latter meaning could be supported by the presence of the *martyrium* of the apostle Philip, containing what seems to be incubation chambers, in Hierapolis, just a few kilometers away from Laodicea, as suggested by Amsler 1999, 401–402.

55 The second part of the canon forbids to meet heretic bishops. For possibilities of identification of these “heretics”, cf. Lenkaiyté Ostermann 2020–2021, 106–107, n. 165.

56 Cf. Maier 1995, 56. The canon 11 of Gangra, directed against the contempt towards those who hold agapes (ἀγάπας) and invite their brethren, targets more the arrogant attitude than the conflictual location. On ἀγάπη as “common meal of fellowship” that could take place in cemeteries or private houses, see Lampe 1961, 9; Rubio Navarro 2014. Two canons of the council of Laodicea forbid to take away portions of food from agapes (canon 27) and to hold agapes in churches (canon 28), see also below, note 68.

ἑθέλοι πράττειν)” without the assistance of a presbyter approved by a bishop.⁵⁷ The legislators of the council mention no particular building used for these sectarian meetings, but instead a private space (ἰδίᾳ, as opposed to public),⁵⁸ a situation and vocabulary that are similar to what is found in the canon 5 of the Council of Antioch.⁵⁹

In Laodicea, bishops and presbyters are prohibited to offer oblations “in the houses” (ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις, canon 58) which are clearly opposed to churches, as suggested by adjacent canons dedicated to liturgy. Another canon of Laodicea (canon 33) forbids to “join in prayers (συνεύχεσθαι) with heretics or schismatics”. No particular place or occasion for prayer is mentioned, but a common prayer presupposes a shared place. More precision appears in the canon 6 where heretics are denied “to enter the house of God (τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ) while they continue in heresy”,⁶⁰ this being the sole ban for heretics to access a church among the Greek canons.⁶¹

Similarly to the terminology used in the Council of Antioch, in both the canons of Gangra and of Laodicea οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ means a building, while ἐκκλησία (together with the related verb ἐκκλησιάζω in the canons of Gangra) probably indicates an assembly, despite the fact that ἐκκλησία is a usual word to designate a church in the 4th century.⁶² Besides, nowhere in the Greek canons are places of heretical assemblies, nor heretical assemblies themselves, called “churches” or “houses of God”. One notices instead a deliberate intention of ecclesiastical legislators to reserve ‘church’ for the mainstream group and to never

57 Scholars studying the apocryphal *Acts of Philip* composed in Phrygian Encratite circles in the second half of the 4th century (see Bovon, Bouvier, Amsler 1999; Amsler 1999) have identified their houses of assembly, named συναγωγή (*Acts of Philip* 5.8; 7.2.4), with the sectarian meetings mentioned in the canons 5 and 6 of the Council of Gangra (Bovon 1988, 4490–4491). Amsler 1999, 479–480 has justly argued against any direct link between the two phenomena, situated in two different regions of Asia Minor and separated by at least one generation.

58 Cf. Lampe 1961, 665.

59 See above, note 38; cf. a similar expression appearing in the passage of Sozomen quoted above, note 43.

60 See Perrin 2010, 206–209, for the anthropological structures of the fear of pollution that (at least partly) underlay prohibitions of contact with heretics.

61 There are numerous attestations to the contrary, namely that dogmatic opponents, pagans, and Jews could be present during the first part of liturgy, where predication could be directly aimed at them. Cf. John Chrysostom, *Against Anomaeans* 1 (Malingrey 1970, 130); *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* 16: *Vt episcopus nullum prohibeat ingredi ecclesiam et audire uerbum Dei, siue gentilem, siue haereticum, siue iudaeum, usque ad missam catechumenorum* (Munier 1963, 169). *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* is a Gallic canonical collection compiled ca. 475/485. For more testimonies, see Perrin 2010, 219.

62 See Dölger 1941, and Mohrmann 1977 for the Greek and Latin terminology for church buildings.

use the word to describe places of worship used by competing groups, a rhetorical technique widely used not only in theological tractates but also in imperial legislation.⁶³ Therefore, the insistence on the private character of heretical meetings in our canons might reflect more an attempt at delegitimizing the cult of competing groups than the real situation.

One notorious passage from a catechetical lecture of Cyril of Jerusalem delivered around 350 (thus corresponding to the period when the Council of Gangra took place, albeit in another region) suggests that churches of a dominant Christian group could in fact coexist with churches of their opponents in the same urban landscape. While explaining the meaning of the words “[I believe] in one holy Catholic Church” at the end of his 18th catechesis, Cyril makes a digression on different meanings of the word “church”. Indeed, he says, there is also “a church of evil doers”, and that is why one, when coming to a strange town, must look not just for a church but for a *Catholic* church:

If ever you sojourn in the cities, do not ask simply where the Lord’s house (κυριακόν) is (for the sects of the impious also dare to call their haunts houses of the Lord) nor merely where the Church (ἡ ἐκκλησία) is, but where the Catholic Church (ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία) is. For this is the distinctive name of this holy Church, the mother of us all [...].⁶⁴

It seems clear from this passage that church buildings of both the Catholics and their opponents in Jerusalem were referred to by means of the same vocabulary. There was probably no architectural difference between the two, neither inside nor outside. Indeed, the archaeological evidence remains useless when one wants to identify the confessional belonging of the Christian buildings of cult, even in the regions where acute theological polemics and even physical confrontations are known to have taken place.⁶⁵ Moreover, even when we know that the churches of one city changed hands from the bishop of one group to the bishop of another, like in Alexandria or Antioch during the “Arian” controversies, “there is no indication that such changes in ownership led to significant changes either in architectural design or in ceremonial and liturgy”.⁶⁶ An anonymous bishop of a persecuted Arian community, perhaps in Illyricum in the first half of the 5th century, may thus complain that as his community, “the heretics” (i.e., the Nicenes) also have churches, divine Scriptures, bishops, baptism, and eucha-

⁶³ Maier 2005, 222–223; Saggiaro 2019. Cf. *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* 81: *Conuenticula haereticorum non ecclesias sed conciliabula appellanda* (Munier 1963, 179).

⁶⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture* 18.26; English translation by McCauley, Stephenson 1970, 134.

⁶⁵ Gwynn 2010.

⁶⁶ Gwynn 2010, 244. “It was the needs of liturgy rather than doctrine that shaped the various forms of church structure that developed from Constantine onwards”, *ibid.*, 243, n. 49. *Contra*, Sotinel 2005, 429.

rist, all of which are no different in appearance from those of “the true Church of Christ”.⁶⁷

If we come back to the canons of Gangra, one passage gives a glimpse of what is considered by the ecclesiastical legislators to be “the house of God”. We read in the epilogue of the canons:

We reverence the houses of God (τοὺς οἴκους τοῦ θεοῦ) and embrace the assemblies (συνόδους) held therein as holy and helpful (ἁγίας καὶ ἐπωφελεῖς), not confining piety within the houses (ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις), but above all places reverencing (τιμῶμεν) the one built in the name of God; and we approve of gathering together in this church of God itself (ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ) for the common profit.

The legislators of the council insist on places “built in the name of God”, while reducing the merit of piety practiced “within the houses”. Interestingly, however, although the text mentions respect due to the “church of God”, the holy character is conferred not to the building but to the assembly meeting therein. No argument in favor of the sacred character of the building itself or its religious furniture is mentioned. It is therefore not the sacrality of the building that sanctions the assemblies held therein, but the building’s administrative status approved by a local bishop.

Nowhere else in the canons is the special status of the building where assembly meets brought forth either. Only the canons of Laodicea call to respectful behavior of those present in a church – one should not “hold agapes, as they are called, in the Lord’s houses, or churches (ἐν τοῖς κυριακοῖς ἢ ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις), [nor eat and spread] couches in the building” (canon 28)⁶⁸ – and insist that the altar is reserved to clerics (canon 19; cf. canon 56) and forbidden to women (canon 44), an allusion to its sacred character.⁶⁹

These observations lead to the broader question of the status of churches. From a legal point of view, since the rescript of Licinius of 313 (falsely called the “Edict of Milan”)⁷⁰ granting restitution of ecclesial property in the Eastern prov-

67 *Opus imperfectum in Matthaëum* 49 (PG 56, col. 909): *omnia haec, quae sunt proprie Christi in veritate, habent et haereses illae in schismate: similiter Ecclesias, similiter et ipsas Scripturas divinas, similiter episcopos, caeterosque ordines clericorum, similiter baptismum, aliter eucharistiam, et caetera omnia*; the new edition prepared by Joop van Banning has a slightly different text which makes more sense: *omnia haec, quae sunt proprie Christi in veritate, habent et haereses illae in schismate: similiter ecclesias, similiter et ipsas Scripturas diuinas, similiter episcopos ceterosque ordines clericorum, similiter baptismum, similiter eucharistiam, et cetera omnia* (I am grateful to J. van Banning for sharing the edited passage); cf. *ibid.* 19 (PG 56, col. 737).

68 On agapes, cf. above, note 56. For κυριακόν as a synonym of ἐκκλησία, especially in popular circles, see Dölger 1941, 166–172, and Mohrmann 1977, 222–223.

69 Cf. below, note 75.

70 See Barnes 2011, 93–97.

inces of the empire, the church property was legally defined. It belonged to a local Christian community led by its bishop. Technically, the church belonged to and was administered by either a local community as a legal entity or the bishop as a physical person.⁷¹ There were also completely private oratories, usually belonging to wealthy Christian families. Those located on great estates could “assume a quasi-public character due to the scarcity of churches in the countryside in the fourth century”, constituting on certain occasions “a matter of concern to the ecclesiastical authorities”.⁷²

Yet, from a religious point of view, why should the faithful gather in official “houses of God” instead of meeting in private environment, especially in the view of a long-standing tradition, going back to the Jewish Scriptures, that God does not need a house made by human hands? The 2nd- and 3rd-century texts insist, partly for apologetic reasons, on the fact that it is the faithful, and not a building, that constitute the genuine house of God.⁷³ The places of Christian cult were first of all places of meeting, of praying, and of teaching, and were not perceived as places invested with sacredness.⁷⁴ However, from the middle of the 3rd century, an increasingly sacred character is conferred to the actors of liturgy (clergy) and to the place where eucharist is offered, the altar.⁷⁵ It is especially through the increasing veneration of martyrs, the cult of relics and pilgrimages, and the introduction of legal measures to protect churches that the latter came to be considered as sanctuaries.⁷⁶ However, at the end of the 4th century the discussion about whether the building in itself was in any way particular was still vivid,⁷⁷ and the process of sacralization continued well into the Middle Ages.⁷⁸

It is not the place here to discuss in detail this process of sacralization, but two passages from the second half of the 4th century, one coming from Alexan-

71 Cf. Thomas 1987, 11–12; Gaudemet 1989, 299–302; Caseau 2003, 62–64. *Contra*, Farag 2021, 15 and *passim*, arguing that ecclesial property fell under the Roman legal category of *res sacrae* which had no owner.

72 Thomas 1987, 15.

73 Cf. Dölger 1941, 190–192, and Mohrmann 1977, 212–213.

74 See Sotinel 2005, 415 (referring to Quacquarelli 1966), and *passim*.

75 See Dölger 1930; de Blaauw 2008, 277–278; Caseau 2001, 41–42; cf. the council of Laodicea, canons 44 and 56. Up to the 5th and 6th centuries, both in the East and the West, the eucharistic bread was not kept upon the altar or in a tabernacle, but privately at home, see Nufßbaum 1979, 266–299; consequently, there was no concept of Christ permanently dwelling in a church in the form of eucharist, cf. Thurston 1910.

76 See Markus 1994; Sotinel 2000; Caseau 2001, 40–45; Caseau 2003; Sotinel 2005 (for the definition of a sanctuary, 413–414). Isele 2010 has argued that competition over the control of churches between different religious groups was another important impetus for the sacralization of a church space.

77 Cf. Courcelle 1966.

78 Sotinel 2005 offers a good presentation of the gradual process of sacralization of the places of Christian worship; see also Palazzo 2008.

dria and another from Cappadocia, may illustrate how church buildings are evoked and described by two of the most important bishops of their time.

Probably in 357, Athanasius wrote his *Apology* to the emperor Constantius II, defending himself from numerous accusations, one of which was the unauthorized use of a newly-built church in Alexandria (“the Great Church” erected in the *Caesareum*, the precinct of the imperial cult) before it had been dedicated, although it was financed by the emperor.⁷⁹ Athanasius argues that he was forced to use the new church although it was not completely finished and not yet dedicated for Easter celebrations in 352, because people could not have been contained in existing churches of Alexandria, which were too small. Moreover, the people “were ready to go out of the city, and meet in desert places in the open air” (*Apology* 14). The argument continues:

The desert has no doors, and all who choose may pass through it, but the Lord’s place (κυριακός τόπος) is enclosed with walls and doors, and marks the difference between the pious and the profane (τὴν διαφορὰν τῶν εὐσεβῶν καὶ τῶν βεβήλων). [...] Here prayer is lawfully offered (νόμιμος εὐχή), while a suspicion of irregularity attaches to it there.⁸⁰

Athanasius argues that desert is not a convenient place for a Christian assembly, while the walls of the “Lord’s place” mark “the difference between the pious and the profane”, a description that would fit a pagan temple; indeed, the phrase could refer to the precincts (*temenos*) of the imperial *Caesareum*, κυριακός τόπος bearing the double meaning of a place dedicated either to imperial cult or to the Christian God. For Athanasius, a prayer is lawful (νόμιμος) when it takes place in a sanctioned place and with a lawful congregation, as opposed to the desert, seen as a place of illegal and rebellious meetings. Nothing, however, is said by the bishop of Alexandria about the sacredness of the cult itself (which should take place in an appropriate site) although it was Easter, the most important Christian festival, that was celebrated.

Sometime around 380 Gregory of Nyssa pronounced a panegyric in honor of Gregory Thaumaturgus, the “apostle” of the Pontus in the middle of the 3rd century. The Nyssen tells his listeners about Thaumaturgus’ missionary activities and the conversion of his native land to Christianity. After a long passage (chapters 34 to 40) describing how Thaumaturgus has purified a pagan sanctuary with all its idols, sacrifices, and an altar, and has converted its custodian, he then tells

79 Athanasius, *Apology to Constantius* 14–18. On the site of the *Caesareum* and the whole episode which can be interpreted as Athanasius’ attempt at taking religious control over the site which was important to both pagans and Arians of Alexandria, see Isele 2010, 167–172, 185–192. See also the chapter by M. Attali and F. Massa in this volume.

80 Athanasius, *Apology to Constantius* 17; English translation (slightly adapted) in Robertson 1975, 244.

how Gregory entered the still-pagan city of Neocaesarea, gained the favor of the crowds of people by his speeches, and finally decided to build a church:

He at once constituted for himself so great a people that they wanted to build a temple (πρὸς ναοῦ κατασκευήν), everyone assisting to this goal with their goods and their bodies. This is the temple (ναός) which is pointed out to this day, which that Great One, halting as soon as he arrived, laid as a kind of foundation and groundwork for his priesthood, completing the work by some sort of divine impulse and higher aid as is evidenced at a later time.⁸¹

According to Gregory of Nyssa, the motive for Thaumaturgus to build the first church of Neocaesarea was the need to have a place where all newly-converted Christians could gather. This short description of the building of a Christian “temple” (ναός, a term often used for churches in rhetorically ornamented speeches) contrasts with a preceding elaborate description of the pagan shrine and its sacred character. And when in the following phrase Gregory of Nyssa tells that a recent earthquake has destroyed all buildings of the city except for the church, he does not attribute the miracle to any particularity of the building itself, but to the “power of the Great”, i. e., Thaumaturgus.

We have chosen these two passages of Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa because in both of them church buildings appear in broader contexts (personal apology and life of a saint); they do not fall under the category of a theologically-oriented reflection about what a church is, like Eusebius’ panegyric for the dedication of a new church at Tyre (*Ecclesiastical History* 10.4). In neither of the discussed passages (nor elsewhere) do we find any hint about the possible special (sacred) character of a church. Rather, the latter is primarily described as a place where a congregation can meet for prayer and worship.⁸² This may shed some light on the insistence with which the conciliar legislators of the 4th century decree that the assemblies should be held in official churches or places of martyr cult. It seems that it is not so much the status of a space as such that seems troublesome for the legislating bishops (never do they refer either to the sacrality or profanation of a Christian place of cult), but the danger of blurring the boundaries (like in shared rituals at the tombs of martyrs) and the ongoing competi-

⁸¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus* 48; English translation in Slusser 1998, 62.

⁸² For example, when John Chrysostom blames the Antiochenes for leaving the church immediately after the sermon, he argues that a church is a place where prayers are much more powerful than those pronounced at home because of the number of people and priests who pronounce them; otherwise, the building itself has nothing in particular (*Against Anomaeans* 3; Malingrey 1970, 218). Ambrose’s important impetus for the transformation of the status of churches from houses of the Christian communities to houses belonging to God was rather an exception in his time (Caseau 2003, 64–66).

tion (e.g., a presbyter who takes away one part of the congregation) between rival groups.

3. Conclusions

The religious sites mentioned or alluded to in the Greek canons of the 4th century include pagan, Jewish, and Christian places, each category appearing in a historically and chronologically defined context. Pagan sites appear only in the canons of Ancyra (314) as places of sacrificial banquets in the context of the recent persecution. Although the canons of Ancyra aim mainly at condemning the consumption of sacrificial meat, the presence of a pagan site provides an aggravating factor.

In the canons of Laodicea (360/380), bans against mingling with pagans are never explicitly associated to pagan sites as such, although pagan cult places are implicitly suggested as being also visited by Christians during public festivals. Jewish sites are treated equally in the same canons of Laodicea: they are never mentioned explicitly, although they are suggested as shared places used for common festivals (particularly Passover/Easter). All in all, the Laodicean canons indicate that the council primarily wanted Christians to avoid the social and religious proximity with “others” that could be facilitated on certain occasions and in certain places.

Christian places of cult or worship appear in the canons of Antioch (ca. 328), Gangra (340/342), and Laodicea. All of them address problematic cases in contexts of competition between different groups in one city or region, where a part of the assembly either avoids official buildings and liturgy, or/and create alternative places of worship. By imposing the official places of worship and cult (churches and martyr tombs or shrines), the conciliar legislators aim at demarcating clear boundaries where they may be blurred and at reclaiming authority over the faithful who may be attracted by rival or sectarian figures.

In contrast to later conciliar canons,⁸³ there are no regulations in the canons of the 4th century about the consecration or profanation of a Christian place of cult. A survey of some Christian texts of the same period indeed shows that the official place of Christian cult was not bestowed with a special sacred character yet, something that is also suggested by the analyzed canons. In the light of what we know about the private spaces of worship (which may also include private churches), largely attested in the 4th century, the numerous canons impos-

⁸³ The canon 24 of the Council of Chalcedon, taken over at the Council in Trullo (692) as canon 49, prohibits the secularization of “monasteries which have once been consecrated” (Nedungatt, Featherstone 1995, 131). In the West, canonical regulations concerning church consecrations appear in the 5th century. See Farag 2021, who does not, however, notice the chronological development.

ing the use of official churches rather than private places may thus be interpreted as evidence to the process of a gradual episcopal monopolization of the Christian worship, increasingly confined to official church buildings. This concern for the monopolization of the cult is observable in all confessional groups.

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Competitive Sharing in Late Antique Asia Minor

Religious Sites or a Different Arena ?

Peter Talloen

1. Introduction

The model of “antagonistic tolerance” as proposed by Robert Hayden and reiterated in his contribution to this volume assumes a situation of shared religious sites used by different groups.¹ His category of “shared religious space” includes all the sites claimed by at least two religious groups even though they did not necessarily occupy or even visit it during the same period. Undeniably, many elements of religious sites were later reused by groups of different religious persuasions, either *in situ* or as *spolia*, reflecting different attitudes towards these sites over the *longue durée*, ranging from tolerance, over inclusion, to triumphalism and erasure. Yet, in order to understand the applicability of the model of “antagonistic tolerance” – enduring the presence of the Other² – in the multi-religious society of the dynamic Late Antique period, before the dominance of Christianity came to rule out material traces of other groups, this paper will use the more restricted notion of actual active sharing of religious sites. For this evaluation of competitive sharing the use of the religious space by different groups needs of course to be contemporaneous. In the case of Late Antique Asia Minor, however, such a situation of simultaneous sharing of religious sites *stricto sensu* – as specific locations visited by people to perform rituals – appears to be absent, as this paper aims to demonstrate. Firstly, it will investigate the urban sanctuaries of three archaeologically well-documented Late Antique cities in three different provinces of the subcontinent: Ephesos in Asia, Aphrodisias in Caria, and Sagalassos in Pisidia.³ It will then focus on other areas of those Late Antique cities and look for signs of religious competition that could be indicative of a simultaneous sharing of space by different religious groups. In this way it will not only consider specific locations visited by people to perform rituals, but also take into account the whole shared space of the urban center.

1 Hayden 2002, revised as Hayden *et al.* 2016.

2 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 10.

3 For Ephesos in Late Antiquity, see Ladstätter 2019; for Aphrodisias, see Ögüş 2018; for Sagalassos, see Waelkens *et al.* 2006 and more recently Talloen 2019a.

2. Religious competition at pagan sanctuaries?

Prior to Late Antiquity, different religious groups had coexisted for several centuries in Asia Minor, and there certainly were episodes of antagonism during that long period.⁴ In Late Antiquity, religious antagonism particularly crystallized around Christianity and paganism – a blanket term that I will use here simply for its convenience but that actually encompasses a diverse assemblage of traditional, polytheistic cults. Up to the early 4th century, such conflicts occurred predominantly in areas where Christians were sufficiently conspicuous as to attract the hostile attentions of their non-Christian neighbors.⁵ As the 4th century unfolded, the tables were turned as Christians felt increasingly supported by a number of imperial decrees.

Restrictions on pagan worship appeared under the sons of Constantine, from 340 CE onwards.⁶ This eventually opened the door for violence against pagan sanctuaries. However, tracing evidence for religious violence in the archaeological record of Late Antique Asia Minor has proven notoriously hard.⁷ Early Christian writers in particular report the existence of conflict, but archaeological evidence is far more limited, especially at religious sites. Many scholars over the last few decades have therefore rightly nuanced the religious fierceness and ensuing Christian triumphalism as portrayed by these early Christian, generally hagiographic, sources, pointing out their unreliability.⁸ Yet, even if such cases are difficult to prove, it is beyond doubt that violence occurred in some cities as a result of religious rivalries. The example of Sagalassos is informative in this regard. This leading city of Pisidia clung onto its pagan institutions and *neokoros* titles well into the 4th century, even as late as 370.⁹ This is illustrated by a honorific statue erected for a local governor on the city's Upper Agora:

Βουλή καὶ /δῆμός σε, /Πανελληνίε /ὑπαρχε, ^{hedera}/ἔνθα θεῶν /τέμενος ἴδρυ-/σεν ὥστε ^{hedera}
θεόν. ^{hedera} Χαίρουσιν δὲ /θεοί, χαίρει /δὲ Τύχη Σα-/γαλασσοῦ, /ἀγχόθι δερ-κομένη τὸν
/μακάρεσσι / ^{hedera} φίλον. ^{hedera}

4 E. g., Ascoug 2005 discusses the competition between different religious groups in the cities of Smyrna and Sardis. See also the instance of religious violence during the 2nd century CE at Kolyda in Lydia cited by Chaniotis 2008, 243.

5 On early instances of conflict between pagans, Jews and Christians, see Rosenblum, Vuong, DesRosiers 2014.

6 For an overview of this legislation, see Bayliss 2004, 8–12.

7 For examples see Talloen, Vercauteren 2011, 349–355.

8 See e. g., Caseau 2001, and Busine 2013.

9 See Talloen 2019a, 173–174.

The *Boule* and the *Demos* have placed you, governor Panhellenios, there, where the *temenos* of all the gods is located. Not only the gods, but also the Tyche of Sagalassos, who is watching you, friend of the blessed, from nearby, rejoice in this.¹⁰

The inscription indicates that the status of the Tychaion, as well as that of the unidentified “*temenos* of all the gods”, were such that they could serve as points of reference in the contemporary Late Antique urban landscape. As this is not something one can associate with derelict and abandoned cult buildings, the two sanctuaries were most probably still in use at the time, something also hinted at by the “rejoicing of the gods” mentioned in the inscription. This situation drastically changed soon afterwards, in the last quarter of the 4th century. At that time the so-called Neon Library, as well as the polyvalent Agora Building on the east side of the square, were almost completely destroyed by fire.¹¹ For the Neon Library, a dynastic monument in the eastern part of the city, the focused destruction of the *emblema* of its mosaic floor, featuring a mythological subject – the departure of Achilles for the Trojan war – clearly demonstrates that this was more than just an accident but the result of arson, perhaps even carried out by a mob unmoved by the classical education or *paideia* that this building represented. Admittedly, none of this necessarily involves Christians. Yet, the ongoing excavations of the Agora Building, a multi-functional public building adjoining the east side of the agora, have yielded indications that this building too fell victim to fire in exactly the same period as the Neon Library. Burnt wooden beams and large fragments of its mosaic and *opus sectile* floors were found close to the floor level of the subterranean latrine in the western aisle of the building. Here as well there are indications that this destruction was deliberate as the burnt and clean-up deposits found in the filled-in lower floor of the building contained numerous fragments of mythological statuary and honorific monuments, some of which show traces that can almost certainly be attributed to iconoclasm. The targeted destruction of mythological scenes and sculptures in those buildings suggests that this destruction was ideologically motivated. Moreover, the subsequent closure and reuse of local sanctuaries can most probably be seen as a direct effect of these violent events. In 378, the city’s Tychaion, a small baldachin shrine dating from the early Roman Imperial period, that embodied the well-being and prosperity of the community, was converted into an imperial monument, only few years after it was mentioned in the Panhellenios inscription.¹² The desecration and conversion of one of its most prominent sanctuaries – the sign board of the city – constituted a decisive moment in the religious history of Sagalassos. The closure of sanctuaries at the end of the 4th century is also archae-

10 Eich *et al.* 2018, 117 no. 47.

11 Talloen 2019a, 178–179.

12 Talloen 2019b.

ologically attested elsewhere in the city, for example at the imperial sanctuary of Antoninus Pius where a process of dismantlement followed by encroachment already started at the very beginning of the 5th century.¹³

Although tensions between pagans and Christians began to increasingly manifest themselves in terms of violence from the late 4th century onward, when the dominance of polytheism was overturned, it is often hard to pinpoint the exact date and circumstances in which temples and related cult activities across the empire were abandoned.¹⁴ Yet, a broad period spanning the second half of the 4th and first half of the 5th century seems certain, as evidenced elsewhere in Asia Minor.

The exact scope and impact of the plundering by the Goths in 263 and of the subsequent earthquakes of the later 3rd century are not known for the famous sanctuary of Artemis at Ephesos, but they certainly did not signal the definite end of cult practices as indicated by later repairs.¹⁵ Nevertheless, given the already declining importance of the cult in the 3rd century, it is most likely that the temple did not retain its former appeal.¹⁶ According to Christian authors like Proclus of Constantinople (ca. 385–446), the patriarch John Chrysostom, during his stay in Ephesos in 401, worked hard to prohibit the continuing practice of pagan cult at the Artemision, by stripping the cult statue of Artemis Ephesia and allowing it to be burned.¹⁷ While this event cannot be confirmed historically, the literary tradition suggests that the temple was closed at the beginning of the 5th century and the cult discontinued; soon afterwards, the Artemision came to serve as a stone quarry.¹⁸

Even in ardently pagan Aphrodisias, where the presence of polytheists is attested until the late 5th century,¹⁹ there are no signs of public traditional worship after the end of the 4th century. A local *comes*, Flavius Zenon, is mentioned as high priest of the imperial cult during the first half of the 4th century, suggesting an active worship of the emperors at the time.²⁰ The inscribed bases of a statue group, set up in 388 to 392 in the Hadrianic Baths by the pagan prefect Flavius Eutolmius Tatianus, record that they were dedicated “by customary consecration”, a phrase which implies a pagan ritual, perhaps even including a sacrifice;²¹ but this is the last known instance of public ritual at Aphrodisias. If the closure and conversion of the local Sebasteion – a complex dedicated to the Ro-

13 Talloen, Vercauteren 2011, 355–356.

14 Humphries 2018, 74.

15 Muss 2016, 308.

16 Muss 2016, 306–308.

17 Proclus Constantinopolitanus, *Orations* 20.

18 Muss 2016, 309–310.

19 Chaniotis 2008, 249–255.

20 Chaniotis 2008, 249–250.

21 Chaniotis 2008, 253.

man emperors and the goddess Aphrodite – is anything to go by (see below), then the late 4th century may also have seen the closure of the main temple of Aphrodite. As illustrated by the finds from the house of the philosopher Asklepiodotos,²² pagan rites continued in private context during the 5th century, here as in many other cities, but public polytheistic rituals were definitely relegated to the past.

Clandestine pagan activity at those closed sanctuaries can of course not be excluded completely, but the fact that such alleged activity did not leave any clear material traces already suggests that it was certainly not a matter of competition as this would have required distinctly visible traces. In any case, it should be clear that the absence of such signs of clandestine use is not simply a matter of archaeology failing us, because not all traces of paganism were systematically obliterated once Christianity became victorious. As stated by Mark Humphries, “aspects of paganism retained their vitality long after Christian writers would have wished them defunct”.²³ Pagan images often remained present in the Late Antique cityscape, albeit with a Christian makeover; elements of pagan iconography were incorporated into the newly developing Christian one; and inscribed and decorated architectural elements of pagan sanctuaries were visibly reused in the construction of Christian churches. The three cities discussed here all provide ample instances of such forms of reuse.²⁴

Once they were closed, temples and other forms of sanctuaries in Asia Minor met a number of different fates, as has been discussed in detail elsewhere.²⁵ For many cultic sites, a fate as stone-quarry followed. The so-called temple of Domitian at Ephesos, a sanctuary built during the Flavian dynasty in the context of imperial cult, was substantially robbed out in the early 5th century, completely removing the temple down to its foundations and erasing all traces of its cult. The precision with which this demolition was carried out indicated an intentional procedure according to the excavators. Almost immediately afterwards the area of the *temenos* was occupied by new buildings of secular character, such as a latrine, a nymphaeum and a storage space.²⁶ The aforementioned imperial temple of Antoninus Pius at Sagalassos suffered a similar fate: after the dismantlement of the temple and the surrounding porticoes, shops and workshops were installed in the area.²⁷ Consequently both imperial sanctuaries were removed from the sacred landscape and could no longer serve as religious sites.

22 Chaniotis 2008, 255.

23 Humphries 2018, 76.

24 For examples of reuse of pagan imagery at Ephesos, see Roueché 2002, and Aurenhammer, Sokolicek 2011; for Aphrodisias, see Ögüş 2015 and 2018; for Sagalassos, see Jacobs 2010.

25 Talloen, Vercauteren 2011.

26 Ladstätter 2020.

27 Talloen, Vercauteren 2011, 355–356.

Some shrines retained their monumentality and were reused as honorific monuments. After the devastating earthquakes of the 3rd century had severely damaged its structure, the small temple of Artemis and Hadrian along the Embolos at Ephesos was rebuilt in the 4th century and became an imperial monument with statues of the Tetrarchs on its porch; a Theodosian addition in the later part of the century confirmed this usage.²⁸ During the aforementioned conversion of the Tychaion at Sagalassos the cult statue of the city goddess was replaced with images of the empress Constantia (later Eudoxia) and the emperors Gratian and Valentinian II, as the new protectors of the city.²⁹ Given the changed nature of imperial veneration in Late Antiquity, emperors and their family members became figures that could be respected by pagans and Christian alike: while the emperor was still considered a sacred figure and acted as the medium between God and his people, most of the specifically religious aspects of the imperial cult had disappeared and imperial statues were mainly honorific in nature, retaining the associations and connotations with authority they had.³⁰ Rather than an element of competition, the veneration of the emperors appears to have provided one of few contexts in which the crossing of religious boundaries was possible.

Other civic functions of temples are also attested in the case-studies presented here: the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias was abandoned as a cult center and turned into a shopping mall during the second half of the 4th century. The complex now combined commercial activity with imperial and civic display: specifically cult-related reliefs were destroyed, but reliefs depicting imperial persona and mythological figures that reflected the history and mythology of the city were preserved.³¹ The Doric Temple at Sagalassos, on the other hand, became a watchtower flanking the new northwest city gate, built as part of the Late Antique defenses.³² Both sanctuaries were therefore removed from the religious sphere of competition.

In some cases, but certainly not the majority, we see actual religious reuse of cultic sites: the conversion of the sanctuary to Christian use. Obviously, they are the preeminent instances that are of interest to us for testing the relevance of the concept of competitive sharing. At Ephesos, the temple of Hadrian Olympos – the second imperial sanctuary in the city – was again completely dismantled up to its foundations at the end of the 4th century, but its southern portico, one of four *stoai* surrounding the sacred precinct, was converted into a basilica – the Church of the Virgin Mary – some decennia later, most probably on the occa-

28 Thür 2003.

29 Talloen 2019b, 282–284.

30 Kahlos 2016.

31 Smith 2012; Ögüş 2018, 174–177.

32 Talloen, Vercauteren 2011, 361.

sion of the ecumenical council of Ephesos held in 431.³³ Yet, as already established by Richard Bayliss,³⁴ this example of “indirect conversion” – the establishment of a church inside the *temenos* rather than on top of the actual temple – was of course ideologically less charged than “direct conversions”, as it was not the place where the cult images were displayed or where pagans would have conducted their rituals. The famous Artemision perhaps provides a better example as the temple itself may have been converted into a church.³⁵ As mentioned before, this ancient wonder of the world fell victim to earthquakes and raids of the Goths in the later 3rd century and was only partly restored afterwards. It was largely dismantled from the 5th century onwards, reused, among other contexts, in the complex of Saint John on the Ayasuluk Hill. Only in the 6th century may a church have been constructed inside the open air *sekos*, many decades after it had ceased to function as the seat of worship of Artemis Ephesia.³⁶ The church built inside the *cella* of the so-called Serapeion near the Lower Agora provides a definite instance of direct conversion at Ephesos; it appears to have served as a funerary chapel from the 6th century onwards.³⁷

The temple of Aphrodite at Aphrodisias is another example of *in situ* conversion, dated to the end of the 5th, beginning of the 6th century.³⁸ The conversion of the Ionic *peripteros* was an enormous project: the *cella* was dismantled to build the walls of the church, and the columns on the (short) east and west sides were repositioned and aligned with the long sides on the north and south. The main entrance was moved to the west, and an apse was added to the east. As part of this project all signs of the temple’s original occupant were obliterated: the cult statue, votives, and dedicatory inscriptions; even high up on the Tetrapylon arch at the entrance to the sanctuary, a cross replaced what had once been Aphrodite’s image.

At Sagalassos, a somewhat similar process of conversion took place at the temple of Apollo Klarios. There, part of the *peristasis* appears to have been left in place to create a transept basilica on top of the former temple platform.³⁹ The architraves carrying the early-2nd-century dedicatory inscription were visibly reused in the colonnades that separated the nave from the side aisles. However, this did not happen according to the original sequence. By breaking the syntax of these inscriptions, the text became not only factually but also symbolically

33 See recently Karydis 2019.

34 Bayliss 2004, 44–46.

35 The theory of direct reuse put forward by A. Bammer and reiterated by U. Muss (2016) is based on the presence of pillars inside the former temple. Excavation director S. Ladstätter, however, questions the presence of such a church (Ladstätter 2019, 43).

36 Muss 2016, 310–311.

37 See Steskal *et al.* 2015.

38 Ögüş 2018, 170–174.

39 Talloen, Vercauteren 2011, 368–369.

incoherent and illegible. Any impediment to reading the inscription could serve to advertise the object's status as *spolia* while undermining its content, adding to the idea of the superiority of the Christian present over the pagan past.⁴⁰ But here as well, this conversion occurred in the late 5th to early 6th century, again many decades after the official switch to Christianity.

Interestingly, then, a significant time gap seems to have existed between the closure and the conversion of pagan sanctuaries, as it is only from the later 5th to early 6th century onwards that some of the former religious foci were incorporated into the developing Christian landscape, a pattern that could be established throughout Asia Minor but also elsewhere in the Late Roman Empire.⁴¹ By that time the (urban) populace already appears to have been largely Christian, as also suggested by the contemporary material culture,⁴² while the remaining pagan population was no longer in any position to claim their place in official religious space. Certainly, no pagan claims of these converted sites have been recorded at any of the cities. There are several reasons for this hiatus in religious use,⁴³ two of which can be mentioned here. Firstly, Christians sought to differentiate their sanctuaries from polytheistic ones, including by placing them in different areas of the cities because, at least partly, they had other spatial priorities: parish churches in residential areas and funerary churches in *necropoleis* are among the most common types of churches.⁴⁴ These were not areas where pagan sanctuaries are normally expected, but places of major importance for Christians because there the congregations would gather and/or bury their dead. Secondly, Christians simply avoided many pagan sanctuaries, as they thought them to be contaminated by the ritual of blood sacrifice and haunted by evil spirits which had once resided in the cult statues.

Why then did Christians eventually occupy some of the religious sites? Several opinions on how to interpret this direct form of reuse have been put forward: the wish to maintain the monumentality of the city and preserve iconic monuments that provided the city with a civic memory and identity; the reuse of a dominant and valuable location in the urban grid; and of course the traditional view that it was a powerful sign of Christian triumph.⁴⁵ Surely the latter motivation includes an element of competition, especially in view of the visible reuse of architectural members and even dedicatory inscriptions of the preceding temple

40 On the phenomenon of epigraphic reuse in Christian sacred space, see Sitz 2019.

41 For Anatolia see Bayliss 2004, and Talloen, Vercauteren 2011; for Egypt, see Dijkstra 2011.

42 See, for instance, the development of a Christian material culture at Sagalassos from the middle of the 5th century onwards (Talloen 2011).

43 A more detailed overview is given by Talloen, Vercauteren 2011, 374–376.

44 See Bauer 2008.

45 Talloen, Vercauteren 2011, 376–379.

in the new church. Indeed, replacing the religious functions of a temple with those of a Christian church on the same spot symbolized the replacement of the old religion with the new one.⁴⁶ Building the church on the same spot with the same materials was also a constant reminder of the building's past, of what was erased and what was established in its stead. However, while it cannot be ruled out that these spoliated remains still held some significance for the lingering pagan part of the populace, they rather more clearly represented relics of the pagan past, as the people who had actually frequented the functioning sanctuaries had long passed away. If Christians were in fact competing in these spaces, they were doing so with the memories embodied there, rather than with actual competitors. Furthermore, not all reuse is necessarily suggestive of religious rivalry. Blocks of the dismantled sanctuary of Dionysos at Sagalassos, for example, were systematically incorporated into the eastern part of the city's largest basilica (designated Basilica E1) during the late 5th to early 6th century.⁴⁷ The frieze of theatre masks, depicting maenads and sileni on the exterior, and dancing satyrs on the interior, were visibly reused. Although Christians generally avoided explicit portrayals of pagan myth, some mythological figures such as Pan and satyrs occasionally slipped into church decorations.⁴⁸ The respectful reuse of earlier blocks can even be described as a conscious referential process. According to Mary Carruthers, the decision to include pagan *spolia* in Christian churches involves remembering with a new set of associations.⁴⁹ It represents both a homage to the past (antiquarianism/heritage) and the creation of something new by re-focusing the past for the benefit of the present, in this particular case the Late Antique promotion of viticulture at Sagalassos.⁵⁰ The selection and placement of these reused fragments are therefore the result of positive, deliberate choices rather than mere display of Christian triumphalism.⁵¹

Therefore, judging by the fate of the temples in Asia Minor at least, there does not seem to have been much active sharing of religious sites going on between the different religious groups, but rather a sequential replacement of one sacred landscape by another, illustrating the eventual dominance of Christian groups.

46 Ögüç 2018, 170.

47 Talloen, Vercauteren 2011, 366–368.

48 Maguire 2001, 249.

49 Carruthers 1998, 46–57.

50 See Talloen, Poblome 2019.

51 Papalexandrou 2003, 56–79.

3. Other arenas of competition

This apparent hiatus in the use of religious sites, which *a priori* rules out active sharing, urges us to broaden our focus and also look at other public spaces where the different religious groups could have met and interacted in Late Antiquity, in order to properly test the relevance of the concept of antagonistic tolerance. The agora – the economic, political, social, and religious heart of the ancient city – is one of the most obvious locations of such interaction. Colonnaded streets and other places of social gathering can also provide testing grounds in this regard. In Late Antiquity, these spaces of public gathering continued to be frequented by all kinds of groups, regardless of their convictions or beliefs.⁵²

In what follows, a short overview will be given of possible signs of competitive sharing, which are generally far more inconspicuous than the modifications to the monumental sanctuaries outlined above. As the material residue of actions performed by all layers of society, they usually take the form of graffiti scratched and carved as kinds of territorial markers on the buildings and monuments that constituted public space. Yet, in some cases they appear as institutionalized public inscriptions, indicating their official approval. Overtly Christian symbols, formulae, or words, for example, are documented from the 3rd century onwards,⁵³ which makes it possible to trace these groups in the archaeological record. Nevertheless, a great deal of the evidence is equivocal, ambiguous, and vague, reflecting the religious complexities of the period.⁵⁴ In spite of this ambiguity, when studied in their context these markings attest to the contemporary use of those public spaces by different religious groups who, as a manner of competition, used their religious identity to stake out their place in urban space.

Perhaps one of the most blatant examples of competition comes from the Upper Agora at Sagalassos. There, the acclamation *Heis Theos* (“One God”) was carved as a graffito on a column fragment carrying a 2nd-century CE dedicatory inscription for the *Hagnai Theai* – the “holy goddesses” who can most probably be identified as Demeter and Persephone – which was reused to cover a water channel in the 5th or early 6th century (fig. 1).⁵⁵

The acclamation *Heis Theos* carved on the monument is a formula normally associated with religious competition and especially common in the late 4th and early 5th centuries.⁵⁶ Together with the mutilation of the relief above the

52 Lavan 2020, 263–338. *Necropoleis* were of course also places where religious identity could be expressed, but these settings will not be addressed in this paper.

53 Tabbernee 2008, 127–129.

54 Chaniotis 2008, 246.

55 Talloen 2019a, 176–178.

56 Trombley 1993, 313–315. The phrase was a liturgical feature of temple conversion during the 4th to 6th centuries (Trombley 2004, 72).



Fig. 1: The half-column with the dedicatory inscription of the *Hagnai Theai* sanctuary and the *Heis Theos* formula from Sagalassos (Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project).

dedicatory text, it shows a vigorous, most probably Christian reaction to an architectural element of a pagan sanctuary. The abbreviated form *heis* was also found twice, carved on the northern pillar of the southeast arch that gave access to the same agora. Although it is often questioned whether the formula is either in opposition to the traditional gods or rather to some Christian doctrinal for-

mulation, the instance of the formula on the half-column with a dedicatory inscription and mutilated relief for Demeter and Kore – perhaps even related to a de-sacralization process at their sanctuary – suggests the former interpretation for at least some of the instances on the Upper Agora. As they were intended to be seen by contemporary viewers, these slogansque graffiti were undoubtedly directed at religious competitors frequenting the same space.

The paved street, known as the Embolos, that proceeds from the Upper Agora of Ephesos to the Library of Celsus, was one of the busiest traffic arteries of the city and remained also in Late Antiquity a focus of ceremony.⁵⁷ In the early 5th century, on the small plaza situated at the western end of the Embolos, a base for a cross was erected, replacing a statue of the goddess Artemis. A certain Demeas proudly commemorated in the metrical inscription on its base how he had destroyed the statue of the “demon” Artemis and replaced it with “the symbol of truth, honoring the god who drives away the images”. The inscription continues with the precision: “I have set up the cross, the immortal and victorious symbol of Christ” (fig. 2).⁵⁸

Clearly, Artemis – the once all-mighty symbol of pagan Ephesos⁵⁹ – was now under attack and gradually erased from the cityscape, with official sanction. Yet, not all pagan imagery in the city suffered this fate as is clear from a series of Nike statues erected along the same street in honor of the Theodosian dynasty.⁶⁰ Originally dedications made to celebrate victories by local athletes, these statues of Victory were now moved to the Embolos to flank a statue of the empress Aelia Flacilla (379–386) near the converted temple of Artemis and Hadrian where the same dynasty was also honored (see above). The image of Victory was an essential part of Theodosian iconography, in a period where semi-divine entities such as Tyche and Nike were prominent. Although no longer considered a goddess in her own right, Nike will surely have shared in the rituals of the imperial ceremony that focused on the Embolos, undoubtedly much to the delight of the remaining pagans.

At the statue production center of Aphrodisias we see another, more covert, form of Christian activism: a group of newly carved Late Antique portraits from the city’s agoras, all dating to the late 4th to early 5th century, display the letters XMT at the back of the head. The letters are the acronym for *Christon Maria gennā*, “Christ was born to Mary”, a common blessing and protection from evil.⁶¹ In one instance these three Greek letters were inscribed on top of the head

57 Ladstätter 2009.

58 Engelmann *et al.* 1980, n° 1351.

59 On the popularity and importance of the iconic image of Artemis Ephesia, see Elsner 1997, and Oster 2006.

60 Roueché 2002.

61 Tjäder 1970; Tabbernee 2008, 130.

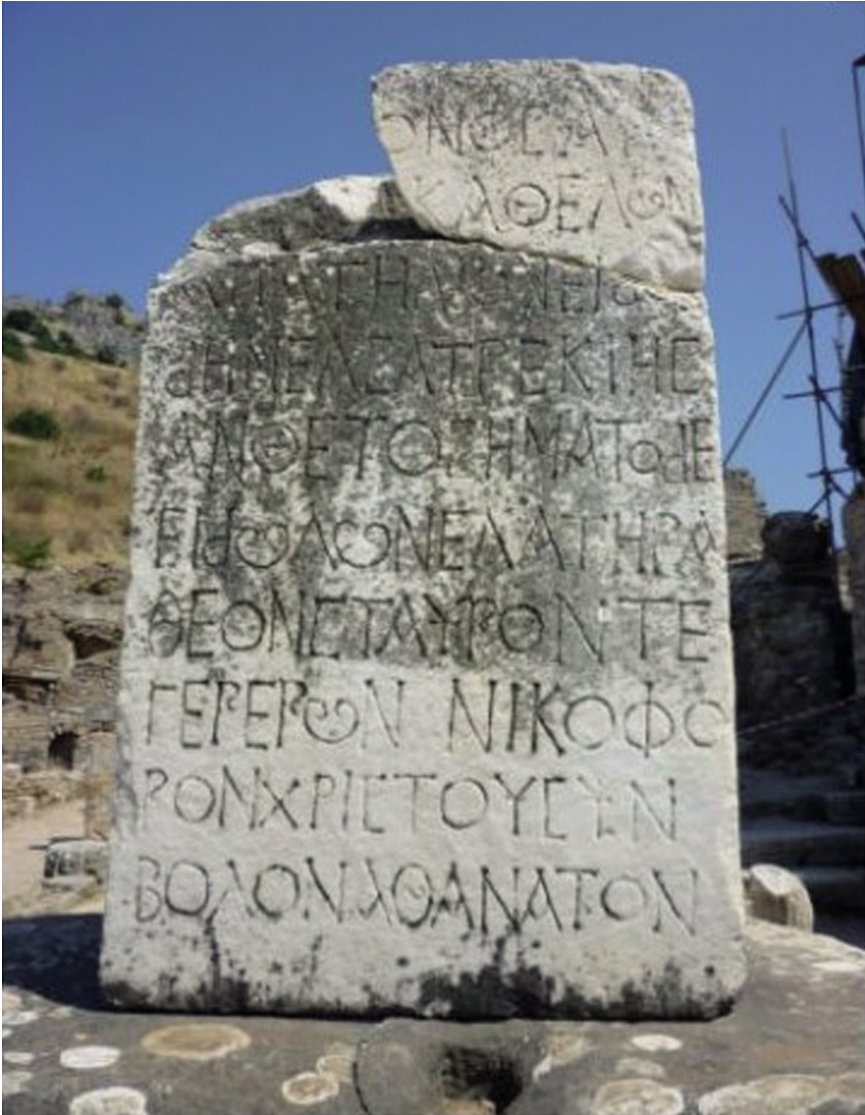


Fig. 2: The Cross monument of Demeas at Ephesos (Last Statues of Antiquity, LSA-610).

of the statue of Oecumenius, the governor of Caria at the end of 4th to beginning of the 5th century (fig. 3).⁶²

62 Smith 2002.



Fig. 3: A detail of the head of governor Oecumenius with the acronym XMI (Smith 2002, 151 fig. 2)

We cannot know with any certainty why the sculptor engraved this Christian acronym on the head of the statue he was making, but the fact that the letters could not be viewed by the common public – as the statue stood on top of a tall base against the back wall of the portico in front of the council house – makes this act obviously a covert one, a personal and private expression of Christian belief.⁶³ Roland Smith presented several arguments for the view that the sculptor’s Christian beliefs stood in contrast to those of the governor whose statue he had been instructed to make,⁶⁴ which would identify it as an attempt to diminish the maleficence of the pagan subject’s religion. In any case, the obscure way of carving these letters suggests a charged religious environment at Late Antique Aphrodisias – and the need for both pagans and Christians to take care when disclosing deeply felt religious beliefs in public settings.

On the city’s south agora explicit signs of hostile interaction between Christians and other groups are present. Early-6th-century acclamations at the west end of the public space expressed the wish that the enemies of the Christian benefactor Albinus be thrown into the river: “The whole city says this: Your enemies to the river! May the great God grant this.”⁶⁵ Such declarations were public performances by Christian groups, texts meant to be read by their opponents. The latter were not sitting on their hands either and carved their symbols

63 At Ephesos, identical formulas were already openly used at the beginning of honorific inscriptions from the exact same period (see Lavan 2020, 560), demonstrating, once again, the very local character of late antique religious environment.

64 Smith 2002.

65 Roueché 1984, 190–196; Chaniotis 2015.

on the walls and columns of the same square, in response to the rise of the Christian cross in public inscriptions and private graffiti, as part of a kind of competitive dialogue.⁶⁶ Jewish menorahs, the central cult object of the Jerusalem Temple and symbol of Jewish identity (fig. 4) were to be found – representing this other important religious group at Aphrodisias – as well as the *labrys*, the double axe of Carian Zeus and a known votive gift for Aphrodite, used by polytheists.⁶⁷

The same symbols are also present on the pillars in front of the shops installed inside the rooms of the South Building of the former Sebasteion, which were used for commercial and artisanal activity from the mid-4th to the 7th century.⁶⁸ Although these instances do not necessarily represent signs of competition, the shop owners of different persuasions obviously carved them to express their religious identity.⁶⁹ Such graffiti reveal the importance of religious identities for the inhabitants of Late Antique Aphrodisias and the competition among Jews, Christians, and pagans at the time. In addition to confrontations between pagans and Christians, local profiles of religious diversity could encourage other forms of conflict, for instance between Christians and Jews. The fact that some of the Jewish symbols and the name *Hebraioi* were later erased clearly shows that the Christians were not only in competition with the polytheists but also with the Jews.⁷⁰

As the 6th century progressed, Christianity became explicitly dominant, leading to the elimination of alternatives and a tougher stance towards pagan heritage – the third and final stage of the three-stage model of Christianization recently proposed by Aude Busine.⁷¹ Although traces of paganism disappeared in urban landscape of Asia Minor in the course of the 6th century,⁷² this in no way meant the end of religious rivalry in contemporary society. Competition now continued between Christian groups – either adherents of distinct Chris-

66 Such expression of religious identity had been absent from the cityscape until the “aggressive” rise of Christianity in Late Antiquity (Chaniotis 2002).

67 On the importance of Jewish groups at Aphrodisias, see Chaniotis 2008, 246–249. For the use of the *labrys*, see Chaniotis 2008, 259 and Chaniotis 2015.

68 Ögüç 2018, 174–177.

69 Such religious identifications of shops are also known from Lydian Sardis (Crawford 1990, 49 and 65).

70 See Chaniotis 2002, 95–96; Chaniotis 2008, 249.

71 Busine 2015, 11–13: Firstly, a phase of secularization; followed by the adoption/appropriation of local religious practices; and finally, the elimination of alternatives. This transition from an older and more diverse culture towards a religious culture with a firm Christian basis in the course of the 6th century CE has previously been described by Robert Markus as the shift from “Ancient” to “Medieval” Christianity (Markus 1990).

72 For the architectural and material expression of Christian supremacy at 6th-century Sagalassos, for example, see Talloen 2019a, 187–195.



Fig. 4: A Menorah carved on a pillar of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias (picture by Peter Talloen)

tian doctrines or associations worshiping different saints⁷³ – perpetuating the dichotomy between ‘us and them’ in which religious identity remained a formidable tool.

4. Conclusion

A straightforward application of the concept of antagonistic tolerance – enduring the presence of the ‘Other’ – in the restricted sense of contemporaneous active sharing does not seem possible for the religious sites in Late Antique Asia Minor: the sequential instead of simultaneous use of known sacred sites in the three case-studies precludes this. Most pagan sanctuaries were simply avoided by Christians, and any religious reuse that did occur only took place several decennia after the site had ceased to function as a pagan cult place. Christianity had to achieve dominance before it moved into sacred spaces of the Others, a process dubbed “antagonistic inclusion” by Hayden.⁷⁴ The urban networks of religious sites of Late Antiquity illustrate the change in dominance rather than the actual sharing of sacred space between different groups. Nevertheless, Late Antique urban space provides many examples that hint at an atmosphere of complex religious competition between different groups of the populace. In this shared spatial context, the construction of identities becomes a predominant concern of religious groups. Symbols like the cross, *labrys* and menorah, the use of specific acronyms such as ΧΜΓ, or acclamations like *Heis Theos* served as means by which identities were constructed and expressed. These religious symbols and acclamations on monuments and pavements provide valuable clues about conflicts and tensions; they suggest that the squares and streets had become an arena for religious competition between the Christian congregation and other parts of the population which had not (yet) converted.

While there was surely no such thing as secular space in the modern sense in Antiquity, given that the entire urban center was imbued with divine presence (and thus aptly termed “the urban sacred space” by the workshop organizers),⁷⁵ this urban space cannot, however, simply be identified as a religious site – as a specific location where people conducted religious rituals. Boundary markers that set aside sanctuaries as areas for cultic purposes make that clear.⁷⁶ There-

⁷³ For a recent overview of such rivalries, see Dunn, Shepardson 2021. At Sagalassos, the association of the *Michaelitai* – adherents of saint Michael the Archangel – was particularly successful in claiming its place in the public space of the Christian city (Talloen 2019a, 189–190).

⁷⁴ Hayden *et al.* 2016, 131.

⁷⁵ See the chapter by M. Attali and F. Massa in this volume.

⁷⁶ On the boundary markers of sacred land – encompassing all lands owned by the gods – see Horster 2010.

fore, a spatial adjustment of the concept of religioscape, defined by Hayden as networks of religious sites,⁷⁷ seems necessary, broadening its horizon to encompass the entirety of Late Antique social space where physical manifestations of specific religious communities could be found, in order for it to be relevant. Perhaps this should not come as a surprise, since social space presented a far more level playing field than the exclusiveness of religious space, a platform where everyone had the “same” chance of succeeding in expressing their identity and belief, an area truly open for competition, at least as long as the other groups’ practices were tolerated.

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77 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 14–15.

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Sharing Monasteries

Mapping Late Antique Religious Competition at Alexandria

Maria Chiara Giorda

1. Introduction

The port city of Alexandria¹ is a useful litmus test in order to verify – through different perspectives – the synchronic and diachronic presence of a plurality of religions in the same urban space and in the same places,² as well as to study the reciprocal influence between urban religious diversity and fragmentation in a multi-cultural and multi-religious atmosphere, but also in a multi-monastic space, which is the focus of this paper.³

More specifically, after the Spatial Turn⁴ that promoted a new interest in space and localization, urban space has become a privileged point for Religious Studies scholars for understanding how religions affect societies and landscapes. This field of study, initially inaugurated by Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges in his work *La cité antique*,⁵ and further developed by sociologists interested in the imbrication between the religious and the secular⁶ is now a fertile space for research concerning religious traditions and innovation, and social and cultural practices.⁷ Focusing on a reciprocal relationship between religion and the city, in a dynamical process of urbanization and religionization, recent scholars have insisted on the presence and the function of religion in the urbanization process and its implication in urban expansion.⁸

Space is a wider concept, culturally transmitted, the fruit of the interactions between actors and their representations. Places are portions of the space, which

1 For a recent contribution about the interaction between religions in “port cities”, see Facchini 2021.

2 See Stroumsa 2003; Arcari 2017; Massa 2017.

3 I should like to thank the colleagues with whom I have discussed this paper; I am indebted to them for having signaled to me some misinterpretations and confusions, but also new sources and bibliographical references: first of all, Ioan Cozma, for our fruitful and dense discussion, Irene Becci, Peter Brown, Renate Dekker, Giovanni Filoramo, Silvia Omenetto, and Ewa Wipszycka.

4 See Knott 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; Kong 2010.

5 Fustel de Coulanges 1927 [1864].

6 See Orsi 1999.

7 Becci, Burchardt, Casanova 2013.

8 Rüpke 2020; Urciuoli 2021.

are socially constructed, and imbued with identities, narrations, memories, and values.⁹ We consider religious places as a particular category of place, whose identity is shaped by a group that builds its cultural, spiritual, and material characteristics, establishing rules, living there, and practicing religious rites.¹⁰ In this chapter, I consider monasteries as a specific sub-category of religious places.

More specifically, I shall focus on the role of monasticism(s) in its various forms in shaping the city of Alexandria, from a pagan city to a Christian city in both its spiritual and material dimensions.¹¹

Taking into consideration the presumption of Maureen Attali and Francesco Massa that it is not always possible “to identify the physical, topographical or geographical boundaries of religious sites”,¹² given the absence of visual evidence and in an almost total lack of archaeological discoveries concerning the monastic places in Alexandria and surroundings, written sources can be used to sketch the political, social, cultural, and religious nature of the historical facts.¹³ The challenge is to collect and explore their “debris”¹⁴ and track their histories and memories through literature and documents in the blurring line between presences and absences of information while trying to convert their immateriality into materiality.¹⁵

As it is well known, these sources express different positions and perspectives; thus, it is only through the cross-fertilization of such sources, and not through the exclusive use of any single one of them, that we can hope to reach a complex historical reconstruction.¹⁶ Whereas literary sources offer an internal narrative that captures and represents above all the top-down dynamics, archaeological evidence offer a more bottom-up and less mediated vision. Unfortunately, Alexandria’s strictly urban context does not offer much opportunity to examine various types of sources and to cross-check them, given the paucity of excavations and material and documentary sources. In this case, written sources are the primary basis for reconstructing the history of the city.¹⁷

9 Soja 1989; Harvey 1990; 1993; Cresswell 2004; Giorda, Hejazi 2013; Giorda 2019.

10 See Giorda 2019 and bibliography.

11 Harris, Ruffini 2004; McKenzie 2007.

12 See the chapter by M. Attali and F. Massa in this volume.

13 McKenzie 2007; Brooks Hedstrom 2017.

14 HadziMuhamedovic 2018, 79.

15 In his work on Alexandria in Late Antiquity, Christopher Haas asserted, quoting the urban theorist Edmund Bacon (1974), that a theoretical perspective on cities as spatial constructions linked together by “movements systems” and a complex network of fluxes, “help[s] to animate our understanding of ancient cities in a way that mere site plans are unable to do”. Haas 1997, 16.

16 See Giorda 2011, especially ch. 1, 1–42.

17 McKenzie 2007, 231.

2. Sharing places: dynamics and strategies in Late Antique Alexandria

This chapter analyzes the religious, social, and political life of the religious places in Late Antique Alexandria in the light of Robert Hayden's theory of competitive sharing¹⁸ during the pivotal centuries of transition from ancient hybrid religion to Christianity. Religious places are indications of the presence – past and/or present – of a specific group and can be seen as a reliable marker of religious diversity. Thus, they help us understand the tolerance and interaction levels (i.e., pluralism, indifference, and invisibility) among different religious groups¹⁹ and shed light on the relationships between groups, representing the majority or minorities, in each case. Group identity is always variable and dynamic, and relations between groups express the collective effervescence of practices and activities.²⁰

In our vision, sharing can be diachronic, which is the case of *secular* or *religious* places that become other *religious* places through transformation, reuse, or destruction. Sharing can also be synchronic when diverse religious groups live or worship together or alternatively in the same place, city, or landscape.²¹ It could happen among different religious groups, but also among other groups, currents, within the same religion. In both cases, strategies and dynamics of sharing are present, demonstrating how religious sites are influenced by internal and external agents (religious and even political). To define these strategies and dynamics, I employ the widely-debated concepts of “top-down”, “middle-up”, and “bottom-up”.²²

The competition for religious sites in Alexandria was a dynamic and multi-layered process with various phases (i.e., between Christians and pagans, between various Christian factions, and between Christians and Muslims) that generally influenced processes of occupying and/or sharing religious places within the city and nearby, being often determined by political and social factors, in addition to the religious ones. The concepts used (top-down, bottom-up, and middle-up) to describe such an antagonism are not fixed categories; on the contrary, they open new insights into the complex processes of a contaminated competition with many reciprocal influences.

In a top-down logic, religious places are converted, destroyed, transformed, or promoted *by* or *with* the help of religious and public actors. The middle-up dynamic refers to internal relationships between the faithful, monks, and clerics

18 Hayden 2002; Hayden *et al.* 2016.

19 Hayden, Walker 2013.

20 Brubaker 2004, 4.

21 Burchardt, Giorda 2021.

22 Bossi, Giorda 2021.

who inhabit the religious places on the one hand and ecclesiastical and state authorities on the other hand. From a bottom-up perspective, religious sites are inhabited and shared by different religious actors in the form of a *mixité* that reflects the intention to build relationships in everyday religious communities' lives. It is a perspective that could be understood through a methodological approach that applies historical anthropology to literary, documentary, and archaeological sources, seeking to reconstruct people's lives.

In the perspective of competition with different gradations *à la* Hayden, the focus is on the dynamics between actors associated with monastic places, with the belief that topography can influence these dynamics and modify them. My argument is that we can apprehend different degrees of competitive sharing in Late Antique Alexandria and its surroundings on the basis of these different scalar perspectives. For example, the top-down religious placemaking was often the result of competition between religious authorities (bishops, or patriarchs) of two main religious parties (Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian). I analyze the urban *space* from a top-down perspective through the institutional material strategy of making it a Christian city, referring to strategies of the competitive monastic institutions (Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian, and internal divisions), and of other groups as well (i.e., pagans). In contrast, the Alexandrian religious *places* are considered from bottom-up and middle-up perspectives, in order to examine, in monastic places, the traces of a more hybrid and pluriform religious life. Monasteries and churches were claimed, occupied, converted, and inhabited by different religious groups in a bottom-up placemaking dynamic; thus, they became places of competition through the direct participation of people who shared them.

I shall try to explore, on the one hand, the concrete interactions and the modalities of attendance, the possibilities of a *convivencia* – as Américo Castro²³ called it – and, on the other hand, the strategies of political and religious authorities even in terms of instrumentalization, and subordination/domination²⁴ through the filter of the multiple sources.

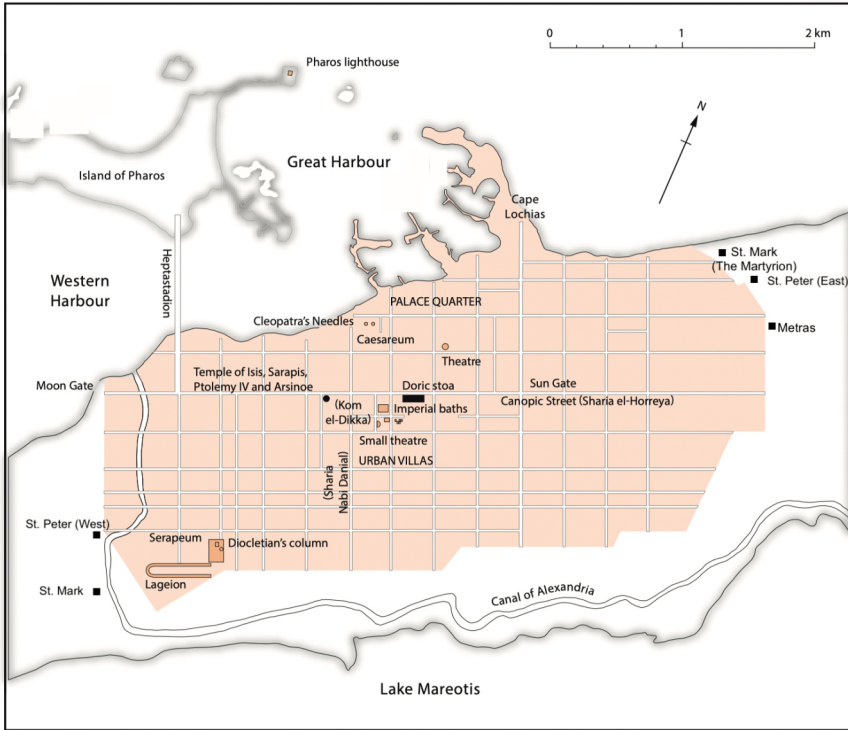
In Late Antique Alexandria and its surroundings, through the sources (map 1), we can catch “Grounds for Sharing and Occasions for Conflict” (to use Glenn Bowman's work title)²⁵ between pagan and Christian groups that shared the spatial materiality of the temples.

As Jitse Dijkstra has shown, the vulgate of the violent destruction of temples by Christians is put to the test in the light of studies aimed at bringing out

23 Castro 1948; see also Burchardt, Giorda 2021.

24 Hayden, Walker 2013, 420–421.

25 Bowman 2016.



Map 1: City of Alexandria (The map was composed on the basis of McKenzie 2003, fig. 3, p. 43; Bagnall, Rathbone 2017, fig. 2.1.1, p. 54).

the complexity, both pragmatic/material and also symbolic of the location of religious places.²⁶

The picture that emerges does not present rare and punctual cases of actual destruction of pagan temples²⁷ and (eventually) subsequent reconstruction of churches, but rather reveals a gradual – instead of sudden – abandonment of sites. The reuse and recycling of temple materials, even partial, is also attested in the subsequent reuse of the sites (which was often not immediate but followed a temporary abandonment) either for secular purposes or for religious functions. According to Dijkstra, however, this substitution/occupation took place only

²⁶ Dijkstra 2009; see also Ward-Perkins 1999; 2003. See the chapter by M. Attali and F. Massa and the chapter by C. Nemo-Pekelman in this volume.

²⁷ In Late Ancient Egypt, and particularly in Alexandria, there does not seem to have been a widespread practice of formal space-cleansing, i. e., top-down cleansing of spaces, followed by reconstruction and rededication to something else in order to erase *tout court* the traces of the past. See Herzfeld 2006.

partially because Christians established places of worship only in some rooms of the temples (which were eventually transformed into churches), that is, inside a building that preserved its external architectural features. Mary Farag points out that this situation was due to the absence of a legal and canonical way to deconsecrate a temple at that time; the legal decision-making about the destination of the *res sacrae* (in this case, the pagan temples) was in the hands of the emperor who granted Christian bishops the right to administrate them.²⁸ In many cases, the remaining spaces were dismantled and the temple *spolia* were reused to construct Christian places of worship.²⁹

Therefore, vestiges, traces, and remains materialize a history and a memory of presences and absences in urban religious topography.³⁰ The reuse of religious pagan places in Late Antique Alexandria, both in terms of (semi)occupation of the building and of recycling of materials from dismantled temples, did not change the city's architectural façade so fast; it aesthetically maintained pagan traits for a long time.³¹ As Dijkstra suggests, it is necessary to pay attention to the “negative evidence”³² that complexifies and renders less transparent the reading of the history of places, of their life, survival, and death and, above all, it is important not to stop at a single building but to observe the history and geography of local contexts, in which different places divide or contend the space. Only such a local perspective, represented in this essay by Alexandria and its surroundings, can offer a more complete vision of the spatial dynamics and strategies implemented by pagan and Christian groups, even in their internal subdivisions.

The dynamics of reuse, change of use, and coexistence in the same place result in historically stratified presences, shaping the identities of places and giving them religious, and more generally cultural, meanings. Following the different modes of sharing also means catching the traces of “the ghosts of place”, the aura of people, and social life in the aura of places.³³

The synchronic and diachronic proximity of religious places belonging to different groups builds a multi-faceted picture of cohabitation in space, sharing, and management of space.

28 Farag 2021, 12 states: “Emperors legally divested others of their sacred things by renaming them, seizing them, giving them to imperially sanctioned administrators, and imposing debilitating penalties on non-imperially sanctioned administrators. Bishops could request of the emperor that confiscatory laws be written against their rivals.”

29 Dijkstra 2009, 406–409.

30 Bayliss 1999; 2004.

31 McKenzie 2007.

32 Dijkstra 2009, 392.

33 Bell 1997, 821.

3. History and geography of the religious places in Late Antique Alexandria

The history of the Christianization of Alexandria is also a history of spatial occupation, transformations, conversion, and competition. One of the most active protagonists in this process was, without any doubt, Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria (385–412).³⁴ During the period of his “lithomania”,³⁵ a localization and materialization of the Christian urbanity, through the building of churches, monasteries, and *martyria*, took place. Despite a narrow and physical identity of Alexandria (*ad Aegyptum*), with natural borders and a dense *trama* of streets and quarters, we can think about a broader cultural and religious identity of the city *in Aegypto*, composed of the networks generated by people, not just the inhabitants of the city (citizens), but also visitors, those temporarily occupying the city’s buildings, and those coming from neighboring places, (all) being deeply involved in urban life. In this sense, I will not only consider urban but also *sub-* and *peri-*urban (countryside) religious places, specifically focusing on monasteries. I am convinced that the religious (but also social and political) topography of the city changed in a dynamic, porous, and diffuse way, through a design operated through destruction (re-shaping), building of new structures and rebuilding, conversion, and concrete affiliation, and through the fostering of relations among urban and quasi-urban places. Their interaction is pivotal to generate and transform the religious (and monastic) geography of the wider urban space: this is the case, for instance, of Sts. Cyrus and John shrine where the Metanoia³⁶ monastery was established in the late 4th century, located at twenty kilometers in the northeast of the city, near Canopus.

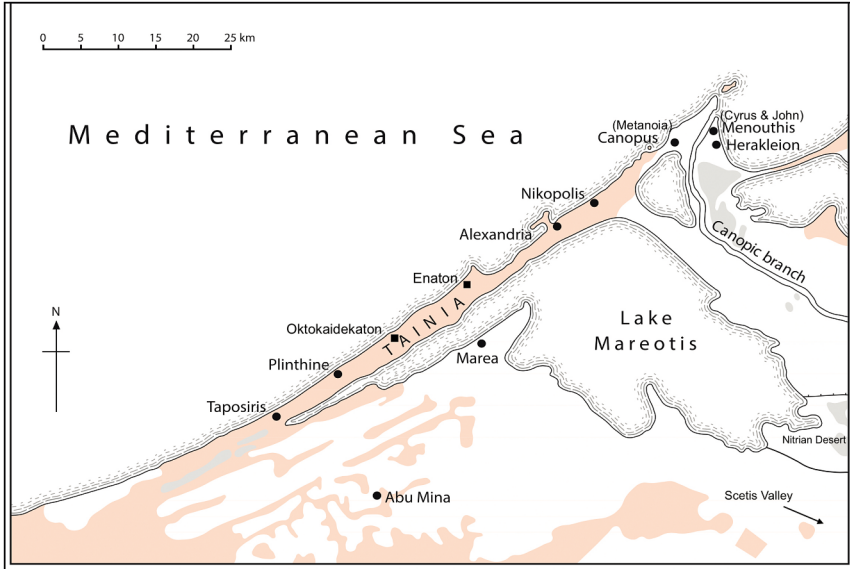
The territorial boundaries of Alexandria’s urban space and hinterland were relatively subjective at that time and often politically determined (map 2). I adopt the perspective of Jean Gascoü³⁷ in considering the Alexandrian agglomeration, the periphery of which is delimited in the east by the Cyrus and John

³⁴ See Watts 2010, in particular 198–200; Wipszycka 2015.

³⁵ Gascoü 2020, 60.

³⁶ The central role of the Metanoia monastery in the struggling for and against the patriarchal institution for some centuries is well-known. Roger Rémondon called it a “bastion” of Chalcedonianism. Rémondon 1971, 771; see also Gascoü 1991c, 1608a–1611b; Martin 2015, 20–21.

³⁷ Gascoü 2020, 4.



Map 2: Environs of Alexandria (The map was composed on the basis of Bagnall, Rathbone 2017, fig. 2.5.1, p. 76; and Gascou 2020, fig. 1, p. 2).

shrine and the Canopus/Menouthis region,³⁸ and excluding, in the west part, the Mareotis area.³⁹

Annick Martin,⁴⁰ Judith McKenzie,⁴¹ and Jean Gascou,⁴² are the most important scholars who have furnished a list of Christian churches, monasteries, and *martyria* in the “Golden Age” of Christianity, by combining various ancient sources (from apocryphal texts to canonical writings).

³⁸ Regarding the administrative terminology such as *polis*, *metropolis*, and *kome*, I concur with Alan Bowman that the ancient sources are for the most part clear and unambiguous but need a more nuanced picture as far as the concepts of “suburban” or “hinterland” are concerned, as they are usually seen as outlying settlements with a simply agricultural function. However, Jean Gascou outlined that the suburbs of Alexandria had more than an agricultural function. For example, the Metanoia monastery had the privilege of asylum for Chalcedonian clerics in the middle of the 5th century. Gascou 1991c, 1609a; Bowman 2011, 333, 351.

³⁹ For this reason, this chapter does not take into consideration the St. Menas monastery, located in the Mareotis area 43/45 km southwest from Alexandria. Regarding Mareotis’ ancient monuments and St. Menas monastery in the Late Antiquity in Egypt, see: De Cosson 1985; Grossmann 1998; Maraval 2006; Bangert 2010; El Gendi 2017.

⁴⁰ Martin 1984; 1996; 2006.

⁴¹ McKenzie 2007.

⁴² Gascou 1998; 2002; 2005; 2020.

The sharp division between “Miaphysites” and “Chalcedonian” parties is not enough when one also wants to take into account, in the religious panorama of Egypt in those centuries,⁴³ the existence of Eutychians, *acephaloi*, and *diacrimonenes*; using multiple groups and sub-groups is also useful when referring to monks belonging to different anti-Chalcedonian factions, with no overlap between designations for in-groups and out-groups (self and hetero definitions).⁴⁴ I will come back to them, but here we can mention, e.g., the party (*meris*) of Gaianites (followers of Gaianus, archdeacon under Timothy Aelurus, and elected patriarch of Alexandria), and the non-Chalcedonian faction of Julian of Hali-carnassus’ side.⁴⁵ This plurality protects against the risk of imposing a polarized view of the actors in the dynamics of coexistence.

The same terminological caution must be adopted for the variety of monastic places indicated by Coptic and Greek terminology. It is not always clear whether the words employed to define places actually referred to monasteries or to other kinds of building, as the word *topos* illustrates.⁴⁶

In this apparent and problematic dichotomous history, through the lens of the historical anthropology⁴⁷ of ancient sources, we can discover how places were syncretic fragments,⁴⁸ often used and inhabited by different groups.

4. Religious competition in Alexandrian monasteries

4.1. The top-down strategies: Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian parties and internal divisions

The institutional dynamics and the way to control and set up the monastic space in Alexandria’s Churches (both Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian) are key points that allow us to frame the strategies of the religious competition in the monastic places. Two centuries after the Council of Chalcedon of 451, until the Arabs’ conquest of Egypt (638–646), the Egyptian See of Alexandria was claimed by Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian religious parties and at some points two different bishops were recognized for the same site.

43 Blaudeau 2006, 15–18. Blaudeau shows how ancient the use of the polemical notion of “monophysism” is, emphasizing that the term is not present in earlier sources like *De sectis* or *De iis qui ad ecclesiam accedunt* of Timothy of Constantinople. Moreover, he quotes other scholarly attempts to designate the various opponents of Chalcedonians, among them including the Miaphysites. See also Grillmeier 1996, 51, 55, 536–537.

44 Belayche, Mimouni 2009.

45 Łajtar, Wipszycka 1998, 59–61.

46 Wipszycka 2009, 210; Giorda 2011, 21–38.

47 Viazzo 2000.

48 HadziMuhamedovic 2018; see also Shaw, Stewart 1994.

In a top-down dynamic, the identification of strategies provide evidence that monasteries were often episcopal or patriarchal headquarters and places of resilience in doctrinal disputes. There are many cases of bishops or patriarchs with monastic backgrounds or living (or refuging) in monasteries (through practices of displacement and transformation). For example, the monastery of Canopus⁴⁹ was the monastery from which most Chalcedonian patriarchs originated between the 5th and 6th centuries.⁵⁰ Basically, the pro-Chalcedonians struggled by all means to keep their place in an urban religious landscape dominated by non-Chalcedonians. This attempt would not have been possible without the support and even state-military intervention of the imperial authority that protected the Chalcedonian monasteries and churches and their clerics. The loyalty toward the imperial politics of the Chalcedonian Church accounts for its designation as “the Imperial Church”.⁵¹

Patriarch Timothy Salofaciolus (460–481/2) was a monk at the Canopus monastery, and he again returned here as refugee in 475 (or 476) upon the arrival for a second term of the non-Chalcedonian patriarch Timothy Aerulus (457–460/475–477).⁵² From the same Canopus also originated the Chalcedonian patriarchs John Talaia⁵³ (481/2–482/3) and Paul the Tabennesiote (537–540).⁵⁴ On the other hand, some Chalcedonian patriarchs were brought to Alexandria from monastic centers outside Egypt: Zoilus (540–551) from a monastery in Palestine,⁵⁵ and Eulogius (579–607) from the Monastery of the Mother of God in Antioch.⁵⁶ In his *Chronicle*, Theophanes the Confessor does not provide information about the backgrounds of the Chalcedonian patriarchs.⁵⁷ As James Goehring notes, it is quite clear that the Chalcedonian orientation of the Pachomian monks from Canopus continued from the 5th to the 6th century;

49 The monastery was located twelve miles East of Alexandria on the site of Isis’ temple and in the vicinity of other pagan sanctuaries (Serapis/Osiris, and Anubis) and was founded by a group of Pachomian monks brought there by Patriarch Theophilus. (It was also called the monastery of the Tabennesiotes.) The monastery was well-known for “its involvement in the ecclesiastical politics of Alexandria”. Goehring 1999, 259; see also Goehring 2012; Gascou 1991c, 1608.

50 Wipszycka 2017, 221.

51 Davis 2005, 86.

52 HPA 13 (PO 1), 447; van Cauwenbergh 1914, 78; Gascou 1991c, 1609; Stewart 1991, 2268; Davis 2005, 93.

53 About John Talaia, in *The Syriac Chronicle* (4.6) is written: “John, a presbyter of the Martyr Church of St. John the Baptist, a monk, and also one of the Tabennesiots”. Hamilton, Brooks 1899, 116.

54 Gascou 1991c, 1609; Giorda 2010, 112.

55 See *The Syriac Chronicle* 10.1, Hamilton, Brooks 1899, 300.

56 About Eulogius, we read the following: *Eulogium primo Ecclesiae Antiochenae presbyterum fuisse, deinde monasterium rexisset sanctissimae Deiparae Justinianeorum, ac demum sedem Antiochenam fuisse adeptum* (PG 86/2, 2908).

57 See Mango, Scott 1997.

however, keeping in mind that their Chalcedonian preferences were “in direct opposition to the non-Chalcedonian stance of the Upper Egyptian Pachomians at Pbow”,⁵⁸ there are doubts whether it had continued the Chalcedonian politics in the centuries that followed. Supporting this presumption is the case of the non-Chalcedonian patriarch Benjamin I (626–661), who, before being elected patriarch, was a monk in one of the Canopus monasteries and, after returning from the exile, had established his residence at the Métras monastery.⁵⁹ At the time of the Arabic conquest, the invaders were not aware of a strong division between the city of Alexandria and its surroundings. However, they damaged many monasteries and shrines – such as that of Saint Mark⁶⁰ – but spared Canopus.⁶¹ The Angelion church was the site for the non-Chalcedonian cathedral, while the Kaisareion was the Chalcedonian cathedral.⁶²

Other examples come from the non-Chalcedonian monasteries. The monastery of Enaton played an important role in both the doctrinal controversies of the 5th and 6th centuries and the election of the Alexandrian patriarchs. Supporting Dioscorus (444–454), the monks of Enaton were very active in the election of Timothy Aelurus, who was a monk at the monastic complex of Eikoston – 30 kilometers west of Alexandria, between Lake Mareotis and the Mediterranean Sea.⁶³ The monastery also hosted John of Ephesus, Zachariah of Mytilene, and Severus of Antioch after his deposition in 518.⁶⁴ The relics of Severus eventually returned there.⁶⁵ Many non-Chalcedonian bishops came from Enaton, like John of Hephaestus and Peter of Smyrna; likewise, some patriarchs of Alexandria originated from, or had their residence at Enaton, including John II Nikaiotes (505–516), Peter IV (575–577), Damian (578–605/6), Alexandrus II (705–730), and Mark II (799–819).⁶⁶ Among these, we learn from the HPA that Peter IV had his residence “outside of Alexandria, at a distance of 13 kilometers, at the church dedicated to the name of Joseph”.⁶⁷ Patriarch Damian (569–605) had a solid monastic background as a monk since his youth in different monastic locations (e.g., Sketis-Wadi Habib, the Monastery of John the Little, and the Fathers’ Monastery) before being elected patriarch. According to HPA, Damian,

58 Goehring 1999, 259.

59 HPA 14 (PO 1), 498.

60 HPA 14 (PO 1), 494.

61 McKenzie 2007, 256.

62 See the chapter by M. Attali and F. Massa in this volume.

63 Gascou 1991a, 951.

64 Gascou 1991b, 954.

65 Kugener 1907; Brock, Fitzgerald 2013, 138; see also Youssef 2014.

66 HPA 13 (PO 1), 449–450, 469–478; HPA 17 (PO 5), 48–83; HPA 19 (PO 10), 402–440; see also Maspero 1923, 278–317; Booth 2018, 23–28.

67 HPA 14 (PO 1), 470–471.

“this holy father, the patriarch, was living in seclusion, in the Monastery of Mount Tabor [otherwise called Monastery of the Fathers]”⁶⁸ at Pihenaton.

As Philip Booth observes, the Enaton’s Chalcedonian affiliation was mostly politically influenced. The author bases his opinion on the congratulatory letter of emperor Justinian to the monks of Enaton for their returning to the side of the Chalcedonian patriarch Zoilos (541–551). However, soon after, in July 551, Zoilos was replaced because of his opposition to the imperial policy about the “Three Chapters”⁶⁹ (an imperial document that attempted to reconcile the non-Chalcedonians with the Chalcedonians) with Apollinaris (551–569/70) from the Salâmâ monastery.⁷⁰

Although the traditional relationship between bishops and monks is spatially confirmed – the bishop has discretionary authority over all his monasteries – this top-down dynamic of authority does not always have positive outcomes. For example, the superior of the Oktokaidekaton monastery was removed because he adhered to the Julian party; this convinced the monks to go to the city. They raised the population against the patriarch and caused a severe disturbance in the city and its surroundings.⁷¹ A pivotal document, Ms. Harvard Syr 22, ff. 73rv, 65rv, 60r, completes the information which emerges from the letter of the Syrian patriarch Severus of Antioch and also offers a complex frame about the network of monasteries in the extended Enaton area. It sheds light on the monastic context when Severus was in Egypt (around 520) and is also a documentary trace of the author’s moderate stance, as he tried to reconcile different positions, mediating between extremist supporters who burned down some monastic settlements.⁷²

The Alexandrian monasteries became places of religious and even political maneuvers, reversing poles of authorities in a bottom-up dynamic. This is best exemplified by the involvement of the Enaton monastery in the election of patriarchs; it is also well known for having been an asylum for rebellious monks. Furthermore, one should also not overlook the involvement of the non-Chalcedonian monasteries in Alexandria and its surroundings in the struggles of the late 4th century related to the acceptance/rejection of the *Henotikon* (the Christological document promulgated by emperor Zeno in 482), which encouraged a lot of monks from Enaton to side against the imperial religious politics. In *The Syriac Chronicle* 6.1–2 (erroneously attributed to Zachariah of Mytilene) are mentioned some separatist bishops, clerics, and monks who refused to accept Zeno’s document, going against the non-Chalcedonian patriarch Peter Mongus

68 HPA 14 (PO 1), 475.

69 For the history and the text of this letter, see Price 2009.

70 Booth 2017, 158–159; and also, Grillmeier 1996, 61–62.

71 Brock 2014, 48.

72 See the Syriac text and the English translation in Brock 2014, 48–63. See also Brooks 1902–1904.

(477–488). The number of these separatists multiplied gradually and Enaton was their headquarters. After several attempts at reconciliation – mediated by Cosmas, the emperor’s *spatharios* – few separatist monks (also called *acephaloi*) re-entered in communion with the non-Chalcedonian patriarch Peter III, and only after the later patriarch publicly anathematized the council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Pope Leo I.⁷³

As can be seen from the different cases presented here, there was an almost sharp and precise top-down strategy that confirms the existence of a border between religious groups: patriarchs coming from different monasteries represented different trends, and monasteries became central places of struggle and resistance in religious disputes.

In this context of controversies and divisions, in which monks often took part, the physical and material importance of the monastic *topoi* (places), which were also places of everyday life, needs to be underlined.

As Booth notes, the strange case of patriarch Apollinaris (551–569/70), the successor of Zoilus, helps to shed light on a less well-defined and more complex situation.⁷⁴ Some sources indicate that he was a Chalcedonian and persecutor, taking possession of the church and ordering the expulsion of all “believing bishops” from Alexandria.⁷⁵ Instead, John of Nikiou in his *Chronicle* (92.9) stresses that Apollinaris was a reader of the convent of Salâmâ in the city of Alexandria and a member of the Theodosian party,⁷⁶ which makes him a non-Chalcedonian. However, the same John of Nikiou (94.8) points out that upon the request of emperor Justinian, Agaton, prefect of Alexandria, appointed Apollinaris the hegumen from the Monastery of Bânṭon to be the “patriarch of the Chalcedonians in the city of Alexandria and the other cities of Egypt”.⁷⁷ As Booth states, both these traditions basically confirm that Apollinaris was a monk at the monastic complex of Enaton, since Salâmâ was part of this complex and “the Ethiopic Bânṭon is a common corruption, via Arabic, of the Greek/Coptic “Evvatov”.⁷⁸

This leads us to the second part of this reflection, dedicated to the bottom-up, middle-up, and more smoothly mixed religious realities of Alexandrian urban and peri-urban space.

73 Hamilton, Brooks 1899, 133–137; and HPA 13, 446–447; Orlandi, Campagnano 1975, 79–83.

74 Booth 2017, 158.

75 HPA 14 (PO 1), 469–472.

76 Charles 1916, 146; see also Zotenberg 1883.

77 Charles 1916, 148–149.

78 Booth 2017, 158.

4.2. Bottom-up and middle-up strategies: monasteries as places of competition and sharing

In a bottom-up dynamic, Alexandrian monasteries are religious sites, hosting monks, bishops, supporters, and pilgrims of different Christian factions in a competitive, and at the same time hybrid, reality. As many sources confirmed, the daily convivence in Late Antique Egypt was characterized by a fluid experience shared not only by Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians, as some of *Apophthegmata* seem to identify, but also by different currents and groups, including even non-Christians.

In some accounts, monastic settlements became places of spiritual encounters, exchange experience, and mutual learning. For example, in the *Alphabetical Collection*, Abba Phocas from Scetis narrates that in his time at Cells (Kellia) in the Nitrian Desert lived Abba James – a monk renowned for his humility – and there were two churches: one of the Orthodox (τῶν ὀρθοδόξων; i.e., Chalcedonian Church) and another belonging to the separatists (τῶν ἀποσχιστῶν; i.e., non-Chalcedonians).⁷⁹ Even though James was an Orthodox monk, attending only the Orthodox Church, he was also much loved and appreciated by the Monophysites. Thus, both groups lived together or very close in the same monastic area and both loved Abba James.

Peculiar is the case of the monastic complex of Pempton (a suburb of Alexandria), where we find a women's monastery among those of men, namely "The Monastery of the Patrician Lady", already mentioned above, founded by Anastasia the Patrician;⁸⁰ this monastery would have been the first double monastery, or the first with gendered monastic communities living in close proximity attested in the outskirts of Alexandria.

In the same monastic complex, at Pempton Duhēla, there was a strong presence of Gaianites, who had an important contribution in the religious disputes and patriarchal election in mid-6th-century Alexandria.⁸¹ As Adam Łajtar and Ewa Wipszycka mentioned,⁸² these monks represented all the possible religious and even political currents. In spite of various attempts at discriminating

⁷⁹ PG 65, 432B.; for English text, see Wortley 2014, 313–314.

⁸⁰ Vivian 2008, 71, 73.

⁸¹ Gaianites are included in Sophronius' narration about the shrine for Sts. Cyrus and John at the beginning of the 7th century. He mentioned that he attended Christmas festivities in the Church of Theonas (still a Chalcedonian Church until the Middle Ages: *Synaxarium Iacobite*, 347), which was used in turns by Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians, particularly attended by Julianists and Gaianites (see *Narratio miraculorum SS. Cyri et Joannis sapientium anargyrorum*, in PG, 87/3, 3460, 3461, 3465). Gaianites are also mentioned by John of Nikiou in his *Chronicle* (116.10, see Charles 1916, 186), as well as in HPA during the 7th and 8th centuries: it is a *longue durée* history. See HPA 15 (PO 5), 4–5; HPA 16 (PO 5), 25–26; 32–36.

⁸² See Łajtar, Wipszycka 1998, 64–65.

and marginalizing them, their survival is documented by numerous sources. As is often the case, the condition of being in a minority group could only increase internal solidarity and ties of proximity.⁸³ Moreover, the supposed presence of women at the monastery at Pempton could be interpreted as another form of sharing of the place between monks and nuns under the form of a double monastery or two monastic communities living very close to each other (banned by emperor Justinian in the 6th century).⁸⁴ Thus, Pempton was emblematic of this kind of *mixité* of currents, living together and sharing place: in this case, the two (non-Chalcedonian) *meris*, one of the Gaianites (under patriarch Timothy III) and the other one of the Severians.⁸⁵ It can be argued that there was no doctrinal uniformity or assimilation in the monasteries at that time. Such cohabitations, easier to achieve in semi-anachoretic than cenobitic settings,⁸⁶ are an important indicator through which compromises and antagonistic competition can be measured but one which does not suppress differences.

Examples of coexistence are found both at Taposiris and Enaton. The Byzantine monk John Moschus visited the monastic complex of Enaton and wrote about the spiritual life of some monks dwelling there.⁸⁷ At that time, Enaton was a very popular monastic place because of the multitude of spiritual fathers living there. John Moschus mentions that he and his companion Sophronius visited the monastery of Abba John the Eunuch for the benefit of their souls.⁸⁸ Paul van Cauwenbergh, following Leontius of Neapolis,⁸⁹ notes that John Moschus and Sophronius “engagèrent avec les sévériens et les autres hérétiques vivant dans la région de fréquentes discussions, et s’efforcèrent de conquérir à la juridiction du patriarche melkite de nombreux couvents”.⁹⁰

Furthermore, a middle-up dynamic related to relations between monks and bishops/monks and imperial authorities can also be identified. Although the monastery of Canopus was known as a center of Chalcedonian propaganda, there are traces of non-Chalcedonians here: the archimandrite Paphnutius of Tabennese lived there one year before the council of Chalcedon, and Makarius, bishop of Tkow, stayed there for a while.⁹¹

In 481 (or 482), the monks tried to convince emperor Zeno to consecrate one of them as the patriarch of Alexandria. During the time of patriarch Peter

83 Łajtar, Wipszycka 1998, 69.

84 See Cozma, Giorda 2018.

85 Łajtar, Wipszycka 1998, 68.

86 Łajtar, Wipszycka 1998, 69.

87 See John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* 145; 146; 147; 171; 177; 184. See also Booth 2017, 159, note 42.

88 John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* 184.

89 Leontius of Neapolis, *The Life of John Almsgiver* 31.

90 Van Cauwenbergh 1914, 81.

91 Giorda 2010, 112; see also Johnson 1980.

Mongus, the monks of Canopus led by the presbyter Cyrus were a thorn in the patriarch's side, even though their ranks had been greatly depleted.⁹² As Jean Gascou notes, the monastery also seems to have been a place of prevention of forms of religious extremism since two ultra-Chalcedonian bishops were imprisoned there during Justinian's reign, in the middle of the 6th century.⁹³

The non-Chalcedonian stance of the monks at the Métras monastery demonstrates the fluid and hybrid reality of religious life in Alexandria before the Arab conquest, wherein the political component played a crucial role. For example, this monastery is presented in the HPA⁹⁴ as the only non-Chalcedonian monastery in Alexandria despite the attempts of emperor Heraclius to persuade non-Chalcedonian monks to reject Dioscorus and reconvert to the Chalcedonian faith in the 7th century.⁹⁵

However, Gascou outlines that the *Miracles of Sts. Cyrus and John*⁹⁶ written by the Chalcedonian patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem in the early 7th century let us understand that the patriarch had some doubts about the orthodoxy of the *martyrium* of Métras.⁹⁷ The alliance of opposing parties to fight a common enemy, i.e., the pagans, is a representative illustration of the ambiguity of the bottom-up dynamic. In the area of the former pagan religious site of Menouthis (a village between Canopus and Heraclea),⁹⁸ prayers, and homilies were delivered to honor the venerable saints *thoumatourgoi anargyroi* Cyrus and John, whose sanctuary, a church dedicated to Evangelists built opposite the pagan temple by patriarch Theophilus (385–412),⁹⁹ attracted both Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians.¹⁰⁰

According to the *encomium* on Sts. Cyrus and John by Sophronius, patriarch Cyril (412–444) initiated the transfer of the relics of Cyrus and John,¹⁰¹ in order to neutralize the pagan healing place and replace it with a Christian one.¹⁰²

⁹² Haas 1997, 324.

⁹³ Gascou 1991c, 1609.

⁹⁴ HPA 14 (PO 1), 498.

⁹⁵ On the image of emperor Heraclius as a (non)persecutor of the anti-Chalcedonians, see Booth 2021.

⁹⁶ Sophronius, *The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John* 13.

⁹⁷ Gascou 2020, 88; see also Booth 2016.

⁹⁸ O'Leary 1952, 435. The site of the monastery has been located by Yvonne Stolz in the present Abuqir Bay. Stolz 2008.

⁹⁹ McKenzie 2007, 249.

¹⁰⁰ See Monaca 2017, 288–290. For the discussion of the sources and the inscription, see Sfameni Gasparro 2007, and Wipszycka 2017, 215–216. Regarding the healing rites at the Sts. Cyrus and John sanctuary, see Fernandez Marcos 1975.

¹⁰¹ Sophronius, *Life and conversation and martyrdom and partial account of the miracles of Sts. Cyrus and John* 16.

¹⁰² O'Leary 1952, 435–436.

Although the action against pagan and polytheistic cults seems to have been less intense during the time of patriarch Cyril,¹⁰³ the Menouthis temple was not spared from total destruction.¹⁰⁴

A destruction movement is imputed to Peter Mongus (482–489) by Zachariah in his *Vita Severi*: at the end of the 5th century, the monks of Canopus alongside the monks of Enaton took part in the destruction of a shrine of the “demoniac gods of pagans”; from the same writing, we learn that the pagan shrine was in fact a private house, “a building which was at the time inscribed with pagan characters” and filled with “all other idols and the demons, a mixed bunch of all sorts of things, even dogs, cats, monkeys, crocodiles and reptiles” (35–36).¹⁰⁵ The place was considered one of the last bastions of Alexandrian paganism; the hidden statues of the “idols” were “removed from the Temple of Isis that formerly existed in Memphis by the priest of the time, when pagans felt that their cause was losing this strength and paganism was dying out” (37).¹⁰⁶

The demolition of the pagan religious sites by monks breaks the image of the religious militancy of both the Enaton and Canopus monasteries *for* or *against* one party. It also demonstrates that the Pachomian monasticism was not entirely affiliated with the Chalcedonian side.¹⁰⁷ In particular, the association of two rival parties for the joint destruction of the pagan altar demonstrates that the pagan presence was considered by Chalcedonians to be even worse than that of the presence of non-Chalcedonians, and vice versa. However, according to Edward Watts, besides the message of Christian unity against paganism that the two opposing parties seem to convey, there was a practical issue; he notes “Enaton lay nine miles west of the city and the reinforcement of monks from there would have taken nearly a day to reach Menouthis. Canopus, however, was on

103 See Gascou 2005; Teja 2007; Monaca 2017.

104 Dijkstra 2009, 41.

105 Brock, Fitzgerald 2013, 46. For the French text of the Life, see Kugener 1907, 14–44.

106 Brock, Fitzgerald 2013, 47. See also Watts 2010, 237–238; Monaca 2017, 293–294.

107 Giorda 2010, 99–102.

the east side of the city, and monks from there could join up with Paralios¹⁰⁸ and his anti-Chalcedonian enablers during the journey”.¹⁰⁹

Through these events, a diachronic sharing of place beyond the intolerance manifested by the monks can be observed. The presence of a pagan place of worship in the area is a trace of the *longue durée* of paganism and other forms of religious cultures other than Christians, as well as an “evidence of the composite nature of religious practice” in Alexandria, as William Harris and Giovanni Ruffini note.¹¹⁰ Through the lens of the collective imagination, we can also stress the attraction exerted by a place that had been continuously considered religious. However, for Christian monks, a still-active pagan shrine was a reason to unify in order to fight a common enemy, an action of self-legitimization of the orthodoxy and heterodoxy against paganism.¹¹¹ By contrast, the pilgrims did not care so much about the faction (i. e., Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian) and this is a further attestation of a *hiatus* between top-down perspective and bottom-up coexistence.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ In Zachariah’s *Life of Severos* (13–34), we read that Paralios was from Aphrodisias; he was a student in pagan philosophy and frequented the pagan temples. Following some events related to the pagan shrine of Menouthis, he turned against the pagan gods, declaring they were demons, and unveiling the abominable things made by pagans there. Some pagans beat him badly inside the School of Alexandria for these accusations. He was saved by some Christians and brought to Enaton monastery, where his brother Athanasius was a monk. Such an event determined Shalman, the monastery’s Superior, to take some other monks and go to Alexandria to inform Patriarch Peter Mongus about the pagans that intended to murder Paralios, who was seen even though not baptized as a confessor of Christian faith. Peter authorized the monks to go to Menouthis and gave instructions in a letter to the monks of the Tabennesiotes (Chalcedonians), situated in Canopus, to assist the destruction of the gods of the demons belonging to the pagans in Menouthis. Paralios joined the monks and promised to show the idols and the altar of the Menouthis temple. Brock, Fitzgerald 2013, 38–46.

¹⁰⁹ Watts 2010, 237, note 104; see also Watts 2005.

¹¹⁰ Harris, Ruffini 2004, 227.

¹¹¹ Monaca 2017, 295.

¹¹² Between the Chalcedonian council and the Trullan council of 691 there were many reconciliations attempts between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians. However, Canon 1 of the council of Trullo condemned as heretics all those who did not adhere to the decisions of the previous ecumenical councils, including non-Chalcedonians. Joannou 1962, 111–120. See also Hussey 1986, 24–29.

5. Conclusions

In the framework of the anthropology of ruination, residues, and shards of Yael Navaro-Yashin,¹¹³ I mainly considered the written vestiges of religious places, focusing on monasteries and other places in order to have a broader dimension.

From a macro-scale perspective, Alexandria was a predominantly Christian urban public space (built through the dynamics of destruction, occupation, and replacement). However, if one looks at it more closely, the urban public space was also a space of competition and sharing among different Christian denominations.

In the religious competition of the urban (and peri-urban) space of Alexandria, it is not possible to speak of dominant and dominated religions or denominations, but there was a continuous interweaving of histories of coexistence and different forms of resilience. The three dynamics (top-down, bottom-up, and middle-up) reveal the mixing of forces and the function of the places as fragments, which survived the changes of religions and religious factions in the city.

The detailed analysis of monastic places demonstrates how the institutional strategy of making Alexandria a Christian city through destruction, conversion, substitution, and reuse of materials from pagan temples worked both on the material and symbolic levels with an aesthetical and architectonic transformation of the city. This strategy not only refers to the central urban space but also to the peri-urban space (Canopus *docet*). In this sense, both the Angelion and Kaisareon churches were the guardians/guarantors of the Christian presence in Alexandria even after the Arab conquest. They were also symbols of the (competitive) coexistence of Christian denominations.

Considering the urban space from bottom-up and middle-up perspectives and analyzing the relationship of monasteries with both the ecclesiastic and state authorities, we find the traces of a more hybrid and plural religious life in monastic places, where occasions for fighting coexisted together with grounds for sharing.

Notwithstanding the attempts by ecclesiastical institutions to occupy the center and manifest a symbolic dominance, the members of the religious community or denomination that formed a minority often continued to engage in their cultic practices in places dedicated to those purposes. Still, these places were dynamic, changing their identity in a very fluid way.

Being “in-between” private and public spheres,¹¹⁴ monastic *topoi* were signposts in the public space. Furthermore, in contrast to churches and shrines, they were also places of everyday life, places of lived religion¹¹⁵ for monks, who also

113 Navaro-Yashin 2009.

114 Goddard 2020, 484.

115 Gasparini *et al.* 2020.

opened the doors to their places, hosting various guests and allowing the mixing of people from different groups and religious backgrounds. They are interesting for studying not just their spatial but also anthropological and sociological dimensions.

List of maps

- Map 1:** City of Alexandria (The map was composed on the basis of McKenzie 2003, fig. 3, p. 43; Bagnall, Rathbone 2017, fig. 2.1.1, p. 54).
- Map 2:** Environs of Alexandria (The map was composed on the basis of Bagnall, Rathbone 2017, fig. 2.5.1, p. 76; and Gascou 2020, fig. 1, p. 2).

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Hierapolis/Mabbug in Late Antiquity

A Place of Competitive Veneration and Co-Production between Atargatis, the Syrian Mother Goddess, and Mary, the Mother of God?

Katharina Heyden

1. How to identify shared sacred spaces in Late Antique Syria

A border region between the Graeco-Roman and Persian empires, Syria has been a diverse cultural landscape since Hellenistic times.¹ The great roads that connected East and West were not only used for trade, but also promoted intensive cultural and cultic exchange.

The regional population consisted of the long-established Aramaic Syrians, Greeks, and Macedonians, as well as of Jews who had settled there in Seleucid times, and of Romans and Christians from the 1st century onwards.² Syria in Late Antiquity is therefore often considered a region of cultural-cultic coexistence *par excellence*.³ One might therefore expect to find in this environment convincing examples of shared holy places or “antagonistic tolerance”⁴ at cultic sites commonly used by people who claimed different religious belongings.

Yet, the material and literary evidence for such places of religious sharing is meager. So far, it is limited to the metropolis of Antioch⁵ and the nearby sanctuary at Daphne, which was the cultic center of the greater Antioch urban area and offers a good example of what we could call “competitive sharing” in Late antiq-

1 See Reinink, Klugkist 1999; Todt, Vest 2014; Fauchon 2013; Loosley 2018.

2 As a matter of fact, Antioch is said to be the first city where Christians were actually called “Christians” (Χριστιανοί, cf. Acts 11:26)

3 See Maraval 2003.

4 Hayden *et al.* 2016.

5 On religious competition in the urban space of Antioch see Sandwell 2007, esp. 39–47, Shepardson 2014, as well as Bergjan, Elm 2018. In the 4th century, members of various religious communities populated the city: adherents of the ancient Hellenistic-Roman cults were as strongly represented as Jews and Christians of various theological and denominational orientations. In day-to-day life, religious affiliation seems to have been largely irrelevant. In the course of the 4th century, numerous Hellenistic-Roman sanctuaries appear to have been profaned and reused, or even just neglected and left to decay. The traditional religious festivals, however, remained an integral part of urban life, but they seem to have been popular less for their cultic elements than for the games, contests and local traditions connected to them.

uity.⁶ Can we identify others? The sanctuary of Atargatis at Hierapolis/Mabbug, located about 200 kilometers east of Antioch, could be a candidate.

From the Hellenistic period onwards, Hierapolis/Mabbug was one of the most important regional centers for the cult of the Syrian Goddess Atargatis in Northern Syria. However, the evidence for Late Antiquity, both literary and archaeological, is scarce even here. What did the sanctuary of Hierapolis look like between the 2nd and 5th centuries? Can a barely known apocryphal legend help us reconstruct what happened there during this timespan? Is there a connection between the worship of the Syrian Mother Goddess and the veneration of Mary, the Mother of God, which was so controversially disputed among Christians in the 5th century? Did pagans and Christians somehow share the magnificent sanctuary of Hierapolis between them? As we will see, there is some evidence that points in that direction. But how might this kind of sharing be rightly described?

Very few sources for the religious sites and cult practices in 3rd- and 4th-century Syria are available to us, and this lack of evidence makes it difficult to evaluate the testimonies of later Christian authors. Scholars rightly tend to see a large portion of wishful thinking in the triumphal statements of a Theodoret of Cyrrhus or a Jacob of Sarug concerning the crumbled and destroyed temples of Syria.⁷ However one assesses the historical value of this kind of polemical triumphalism, these works at least show that the names and also the functions of those sanctuaries were still known at the time, even if there is little direct evidence for the shared use of sanctuaries. Read against the grain, the polemics of Christian theologians about syncretisms of various kinds indicate that the victory of Christianity was not always as clear-cut and “pure” as religious authorities wanted their audiences to believe.

Yet, material evidence does not make it easy to tie this general statement to specific case studies. To give an example, a two-sided mold of limestone from the late 4th or 5th century testifies to vivid Hellenic or Hellenized cults in the region of Syria-Palaestina (fig.1).⁸

This mold was most probably used to stamp cakes or pilgrim souvenirs made of soft metal. One side shows three persons sitting in front of a tree around a three-legged table in the upper register. This image is clearly connected to the sanctuary of Abraham in Mamre in Palestine, for which literary sources explicitly mention a rather peaceful shared veneration by pagans, Jews, and

⁶ See Kondoleon 2000; Wiemer 2017; and most recently Attali, Massa 2021. The classical references for Antioch in Antiquity would be Downey 1961, 1963; more recently see De Giorgi 2016; De Giorgi, Eger 2021.

⁷ See Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A Cure of Greek Maladies* and Jacob of Sarug, *On the fall of the Idols*, with special reference to Hierapolis in chapter 1 (see below).

⁸ See Frazer 1979, and a detailed discussion in Cline 2014.



Fig. 1: Two-sided mold, 4th to 5th century, limestone, 13.8 cm diameter. Malcove Collection M82.271, Gift of Dr. Lillian Malcove, 1981. Courtesy Art Museum University of Toronto. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

Christians in the 5th century.⁹ The other side of the mold shows a female deity on a throne in the midst of four cypress trees. She is wearing a mantle and a veil, both decorated with stars, and has a crown on her head. The inscription – ΔΕΧΟΜΕ ΧΑΙΡΩΝ ΤΗΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΙΑΝ: “I joyfully receive the heavenly one” – identifies her with Urania, the heavenly queen, an epithet attributed at that time to various oriental goddesses, such as Isis, Aphrodite, Atargatis, or Astarte.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to assign this image to a specific cultic site.¹⁰ The combination of a celestial crown with the ears of grain is very similar to what we find with Atargatis, the Syrian Goddess, in Damascus and Edessa.¹¹ Does the mold hint at a practice of shared and/or competitive worshipping of the Heavenly Goddess, akin to the competitive veneration of Abraham attested at Mamre in Palestine? Could it be linked to Hierapolis/Mabbug? It is possible but cannot be affirmed with any certainty. This two-sided mold might simply testify to the survival of pagan cults in Late Antique Levant.

In evaluating the hypothesis that Hierapolis/Mabbug may have been a possible place of religious sharing in Late Antiquity one must stay aware that ancient sources do not provide any kind of reliable evidence. I believe it is nonetheless useful to discuss such a hypothesis, even at the risk of entering highly speculative grounds.

⁹ For a comprehensive study of the shared religious site at Mamre, see Heyden 2020a; for the archeological evidence see Drbal 2017.

¹⁰ Cline 2014 dates the mold to the middle of the 4th century and identifies the goddess as Aphrodite Ourania of Aphaka in Lebanon. He suspects that the mold was used to imprint pilgrim memorials at two different places.

¹¹ SC 2:2450–1, see Wright 2012, 199–200; Green 1996.

2. The sanctuary of Hierapolis: assembling the scattered evidence

Visitors of the modern city of Mambij, or Menbij, will hardly encounter any remains of what in antiquity was a huge and splendid temple area and a center of regional pilgrimage. Nowadays, the city probably lies almost completely destroyed by the recent civil war in Syria. Even before the outbreak of the war there was not much left to see of the once-magnificent holy place.¹² The site has never been systematically excavated, and for the reconstruction of the ancient sanctuary one has to rely on a rather haphazard collection of sources of different nature: scattered or questionable literary references, accidental archaeological remains, a few inscriptions, and the descriptions of travelers who visited the place before its modernization in the 19th century.¹³

There most probably existed an important cult center and regional pilgrimage site already in Persian times, controlled by a local priestly dynasty and therefore enjoying a certain autonomy.¹⁴ The famous temple of the Syrian Goddess Atargatis was purportedly founded by queen Stratonike I, the wife of Seleukos I Nikator, in the 3rd century BCE.

Hierapolis enjoyed a strategically important position: it was situated west of the river Euphrates, at an intersection on the major road from Antioch via Beroae (today Aleppo) to Sarug. One branch led to Carrhae (Harran), the other via Edessa to Nisibis and Babylon – all important economic and cultic-cultural centers. In the early 4th century, Hierapolis became the capital of the *Provincia Augusta Euphratensis*. When the Western noble woman Egeria visited the metropolis in the 380s, she praised it, saying that it was “very beautiful and rich and abound[ed] in everything”.¹⁵ The fact that Hierapolis was a station on Egeria’s pilgrimage journey testifies to the attraction of the city for Christian travelers from afar.

At least until the 7th century, Hierapolis seems to have been a lively city, visited by many travelers and repeatedly granted imperial endowments. There is

12 See Kondoleon 2000. Greenhalgh 2016, 243, states that the city of Menbij “has lost most of her monuments, because the town stood at a busy set of several crossroads”.

13 Goossens 1943 has been the pioneer in collecting all the material; more recently see Todt, Vest 2014, 1264–1281; for the inscriptions see Jalabert, Mouterde 1929. Despite the challenging state of the available evidence, there are some convincing reconstructions of the sanctuary and cultic life from the sources: Lightfoot 2003; Wright 2012, 189–220.

14 See Drijvers 1991; Wright 2012, 199–200.

15 Egeria, *Journal* 18.1: *et inde ingressa fines provinciae Augustofratensis perveni ad civitatem Hierapolim, quae est metropolis ipsius provinciae, id est Augustofratensis. Et quoniam haec civitas valde pulchra et opulenta est atque abundans omnibus, necesse me fuit ibi facere stativam, quoniam iam inde non longe erant fines Mesopotamiae* (translation by McGowan, Bradshaw 2020, 108).

no evidence for the violent destruction of the antique temples in these centuries, neither on the part of the Christians nor in connection with the Arab conquest of 637/8. The 12th-century chronicle of Michael the Syrian notes that an earthquake in 749 destroyed “the great churches” and “the walls of the city”.¹⁶ However, the city was reconstructed and remained an important regional center throughout Arab times, when it was known for its antiquities just as it was for its specialty dessert of dried grapes, nuts, pistachios, and sesame oil.¹⁷ No wonder it was repeatedly at the heart of conflicts between Arabs, Byzantines, and Crusaders.¹⁸ Arab sources of the 13th and 14th centuries still mention a “Temple of the Sun” and a “Temple of Venus/Aphrodite” in Mambij, and the ruins of that antique sanctuary were visible to European visitors until the end of the 19th century. When Austrian scholars Klaus-Peter Todt and Bernd Andreas Vest explored the site in 2002, they could still spot numerous ancient and Byzantine *spolia* (tombstones, columns, statues) in the entry zone of the modern city park. Given the scattered state of the evidence, how might we imagine cultic life in the city in Late Antiquity, and does the source material provide any hints of competitive sharing?

If we are to construct a viable framework for imagining cultic sharing within Late Antique Hierapolis on the basis of scattered sources, we should start with two texts: the short Greek work *On the Syrian Goddess* (2nd century CE) on the one hand, and the 6th-century work entitled *On the Fall of the Images of the Gods* by the Syrian Christian author Jacob of Sarug on the other. The latter only briefly mentions Hierapolis, in a list of sanctuaries which, according to the theological narrative of that work, were established by Satan in order to cover the whole world with idolatry. “He made Mabbug the city of idol priests and gave it an appropriate epithet (i. e. Hierapolis)”, the poem says, “to bind it forever to the service of idols.”¹⁹ Although Jacob claims that idolatry has been overcome by Jesus Christ, these verses show that Hierapolis was still famous for its temple in the 6th century; they might even indicate that the cult was still intact at that time. The first-mentioned work, *On the Syrian Goddess*, provides the only detailed description of the sacred area and the cultic practice there. For the period that falls between these two texts, the written sources are rather silent as far as the cultic life in the city is concerned. They provide ample information about emperors staying in the city and preparing military operations against Sassanid Persia, but no description of the sanctuary or the cultic life in the city.

16 Michael Syrus 2.510 (11.10).

17 For the respective Arabic and Syriac sources, see Todt, Vest 2014, 1278, fn. 56.

18 See Todt, Vest 2014, 1266–1271.

19 Jacob of Sarug, *On the Fall of the Idols* 1; Syriac text: Bedjan, Bock 2006; see Schwartz 2016.

At what point Christianity became a relevant factor in Hierapolis is not entirely certain. The first bishops are attested in early-4th-century council acts. Local tradition traces Christianity back to its very beginnings at Hierapolis: in various legends, the evangelist Matthew, or the apostles Bartholomew and Philip, together with Philip's sister Mariamne, are presented as the founders of the Christian community in Hierapolis. These constitute, of course, in the words of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, "inventions of tradition",²⁰ but it is not unlikely that there were Christians in the city already before the 4th century. We do have some information about the Christian community in the 4th century, and we know from the acts of church councils that the bishops of Hierapolis were very much involved in the 5th-century Christological controversies.²¹ The Christological controversies after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 resulted in a schism between the Greek-speaking Melkites (who followed the Chalcedonian doctrine of the two natures of Christ), the Syriac-speaking Jacobites (who espoused a miaphysite Christology), and the Syriac-speaking (so-called) Nestorians who refused to venerate Mary as θεοτόκος, the God-Bearer.²² Yet, none of this means that the pagan sanctuary was closed or neglected. If Hierapolis was the emperors' headquarters for military campaigns into the Orient from the 4th to the 6th centuries,²³ there must have been a cultic life in the city which was adapted to the different cultic needs of the soldiers and generals. The emperor Julian, who stayed at Hierapolis in March 363 and was hosted in the house of the Neoplatonist philosopher Sopatros, did not mention Hierapolis even once in his works. This may indicate that he found an intact cult in Hierapolis – unlike Daphne – and simply had nothing to complain about. However, *argumenta e silentio* are always delicate, of course, and it also could mean the exact opposite, i. e., that Hierapolis was no longer important enough for Julian to mention it. As a matter of fact, however, Macrobius writes about the cultic veneration of Apollo in Hierapolis in his 5th-century *Saturnalia*,²⁴ and the already-mentioned Jacob of Sarug may (or may not) point to Hierapolis as an important cultic center in Syria some decades later.

Overall, if we want to know what this cult looked like, we can only rely on the 2nd-century *On the Syrian Goddess*. This Greek work gives a short but precise description of the temple in Hierapolis, its cultic *modus operandi*, and the respective local traditions, myths and interpretations that were linked to it.²⁵ Although its attribution to Lucian of Samosata and its exact nature remain disput-

20 Hobsbawm, Ranger 1992.

21 See Todt, Vest 2014, 1272–1275.

22 Todt, Vest 2014, 1272–1275.

23 See Goossens 1943, 148; Todt, Vest 2014, 1264–1267.

24 Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.23.17.

25 On this threefold perspective in the analysis of sacred places, see Heyden 2020.

ed, particularly with regard to the satiric character of the work, scholars unanimously regard this work as a valuable and reliable source for the description of the cult in Hierapolis.²⁶ Its author claims to be a native Assyrian himself and an eyewitness of the cults,²⁷ while at the same time writing with some reservations about the various stories he heard concerning the temple and some of the cultic practices he saw.²⁸ His obvious goal is to present an *interpretatio graeca* of the gods and the cult practices at Hierapolis.

Of all the ancient and marvelous temples in Syria, he claims that of Hierapolis to be the greatest, wealthiest, and holiest one. Here is the reason he gives for this assertion: “In it are costly works and ancient dedications and many marvels and images worthy of divinity. The statues in the temple sweat and move and deliver oracles, and there are often cries in the sanctuary when the temple has been locked up.”²⁹ The focal point of veneration there is said to be the female deity, whom the author calls “the Hera of the Syrians” in his very first sentence.³⁰ The golden cult images of Hera and Zeus are enthroned side by side in the inner chamber of the temple, which could only be entered by the high priest.

In describing the cult statue of Hera, the author emphasizes that elements of many other goddesses are incorporated in it. The image of Zeus, in contrast, “looks entirely like Zeus”, although the locals might name him differently, and “you could not identify it otherwise even if you wished”.³¹ About the statue of the goddess, the author notes: “In one hand she has a scepter, in the other a spindle, and on her head she wears rays, a tower, and the belt with which they

26 See first the works of Lightfoot 2003, who considers Lucian the author, esp. 184–221; so does Drijvers 1991, 28. Dirven 1997 denies authorship, but emphasizes that the work was written by an eyewitness and that the content is confirmed by archaeological evidence; Todt, Vest 2014, 1275–1276 seem to follow Dirven’s judgement. Andrade 2013 emphasizes that this “complicated text” (288) shows how Syrians “could constitute ‘Greek’ and ‘(As)Syrian’ as intersecting, shifting categories expressed by the same signs and not possessing clear, coherent boundaries” (312). His interpretation of the work supports my argument of the fluidity and, as a result, of the “co-production” of religious identities in Late Antique Syria.

27 *On the Syrian Goddess* 1: γράφω δὲ Ἀσσυριος ἐὼν (I myself that write am an Assyrian, transl. Lightfoot 2003, 249).

28 *On the Syrian Goddess* 11: τοὺς ἐγὼ πάντας μὲν ἐρέω, δέκομαι δὲ οὐδαμὰ (I shall relate them all, but by no means accept them all, transl. Lightfoot 2003, 253).

29 *On the Syrian Goddess* 10: ἔνι δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἔργα πολυτελέα καὶ ἀρχαῖα ἀναθήματα καὶ πολλὰ θωύματα καὶ ξόανα θεοπρεπέα. καὶ θεοὶ δὲ κάρτα αὐτοῖσιν ἐμφανέες: ἰδρῶει γὰρ δὴ ὦν παρὰ σφίσι τὰ ξόανα καὶ κινέεται καὶ χρησημογορέει, καὶ βοή δὲ πολλάκις ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ νηῷ κλεισθέντος τοῦ ἱεροῦ ... (transl. Lightfoot 2003, 253).

30 *On the Syrian Goddess* 1: ... καὶ ἔστιν ἱρή τῆς Ἥρας τῆς Ἀσσυρίης (... and is sacred to the Assyrian Hera, transl. Lightfoot 2003, 249).

31 *On the Syrian Goddess* 32. Καὶ δῆτα τὸ μὲν τοῦ Διὸς ἄγαλμα ἐς Δία πάντα ὀρή καὶ κεφαλὴν καὶ εἵματα καὶ ἔδρην, καὶ μιν οὐδὲ ἐθέλων ἄλλως εἰκάσεις (transl. Lightfoot 2003, 271).

adorn Urania alone. Outside she is coated with more gold and extremely precious stones, some white and others limpid, many wine-colored, many fiery, and on top of that there are many sardonyxes and hyacinths and emeralds, which are sent by Egyptians, Indians, Aethiopians, Medes, Armenians, and Babylonians.”³² Even more noteworthy is, for the author, that “she wears a stone on her head called a lychnis, whose name coincides with its properties. By night a bright light shines from it, under whose rays the whole shrine is illumined as if by lamps.”³³

Besides Zeus and Hera, there are other gods in the sanctuary: Dionysus, Apollo, Atlas, Hermes, Eileithyia – all of them moving around and crying loudly by night. Among them, Dionysus plays a prominent role, because he is considered the mythical founder of the sanctuary.

Of special importance for cultic life in Hierapolis was a lake below the hill on top of which the temple of Atargatis was located. The form of the lake is still recognizable today in the landscape, even though it is dried up and has been converted into a football field (fig. 2).

In this lake, according to *On the Syrian Goddess*, sacred fish were kept, as it was the case in many sanctuaries of Atargatis. Some of them were extremely large and one even had a golden piece of jewelry fastened onto its fin. There was a daily ritual swimming to the altar located in the middle of the lake, which was also the hotspot of great festivals. On these occasions, the images of the gods were carried from the temple down to the shore. In these processions, the statue of Hera took first place in order to prevent Zeus from being the first catching sight of them, as the author of *On the Syrian Goddess* points out.³⁴

The treaty also describes in great detail cultic acts that took place at the pillars located in the gateway to the temple. Those acts were not performed by the cult staff but by the so-called *phallobatoi* (φαλλοβάται): “One of these phalli is climbed twice a year by a man who lives in the top of the phallus for a span of seven days. The reason for his ascent is supposed to be this. Most people think he converses with the gods up there and asks blessing for whole Syria, and they hear his prayers from the near hand.”³⁵ This passage is intriguing and has pro-

32 *On the Syrian Goddess* 32: χειρὶ δὲ τῆ μὲν ἐτέρῃ σκῆπτρον ἔχει, τῆ ἐτέρῃ δὲ ἄτρακτον, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆ κεφαλῇ ἀκτίνας τε φορεῖ καὶ πύργον καὶ κεστὸν τῷ μούνην τὴν Οὐρανίην κοσμεούσιν. ἔκτοσθεν δὲ οἱ χρυσός τε ἄλλος περικέεται καὶ λίθοι κάρτα πολυτελεές, τῶν οἱ μὲν λευκοί, οἱ δὲ ὕδατώδεις, πολλοὶ δὲ οἰνώδεις, πολλοὶ δὲ πυρώδεις, ἔτι δὲ ὄνυχες οἱ Σαρδῶνι πολλοὶ καὶ ὑάκινθοι καὶ σμάραγδοι, τὰ φέρουσιν Αἰγύπτῳ καὶ Ἰνδοὶ καὶ Αἰθίοπες καὶ Μῆδοι καὶ Ἀρμένιοι καὶ Βαβυλώνιοι (transl. Lightfoot 2003, 271).

33 *On the Syrian Goddess* 32: λίθον ἐπὶ τῆ κεφαλῇ φορεῖ: λυχνίς καλεῖται, οὐνομα δὲ οἱ τοῦ ἔργου ἢ συντυχίῃ. ἀπὸ τούτου ἐν νυκτὶ σέλας πολλὸν ἀπολάμπεται, ὑπὸ δὲ οἱ καὶ ὁ νηὸς ἅπας οἶον ὑπὸ λύχνῳ φαίνεται. (transl. Lightfoot 2003, 271).

34 *On the Syrian Goddess* 45–47.

35 *On the Syrian Goddess* 28: τὸν ἕνα φαλλὸν ἀνὴρ ἐκάστου ἔτους δις ἀνέρχεται οἰκέει τε ἐν ἄκρῳ τῷ φαλλῷ χρόνον ἑπτὰ ἡμερῶν. αἰτίη δὲ οἱ τῆς ἀνόδου ἦδε λέγεται. οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ



Fig. 2: Modern Membij, Ross Burns (Wright 2012, 194). The ancient temple was located in the area of the great mosque, the sacred lake where the football field has been built.

voked much discussion among scholars.³⁶ The author of *On the Syrian Goddess* seems to (over)emphasize the sexual connotations of this ritual when he calls the pillars *phalloi* and to have interpreted it as a Dionysian ritual. In fact, the *phalloi* erected for Dionysus in various Hellenic sanctuaries were not substantial enough to hold a human being for a week, as David Frankfurter has rightly pointed out.³⁷ This is not the place to discuss this in further detail, but it is worth emphasizing that we already find here a good example of competitive religious sharing at Hierapolis. The author of *On the Syrian Goddess* provides a misleading *interpretatio graeca* of an apparently popular local cult that took place in front of the sanctuary, was performed by laymen, and obviously attracted a lot of attention.

Scholars have widely and controversially discussed a possible connection between the *phallobatoi* of Hierapolis and the Christian stylites of the 5th and 6th centuries. Indeed, there are striking parallels between the performances and symbolisms of the two. Yet, whether or not the Christian stylites can be regarded as successors or competitors of the *phallobatoi* of Hierapolis also depends on the larger question of how long the sanctuary of Hierapolis had remained intact and had functioned as an actual cult place. This is where a Christian apocryphal legend comes into play.

νομίζουσιν ὅτι ὑψοῦ τοῖσι θεοῖσιν ὀμιλεῖ καὶ ἀγαθὰ ξυναπάσῃ Συρίῃ αἰτέει, οἱ δὲ τῶν εὐχολέων ἀγχόθεν ἐπαῖουσιν (transl. Lightfoot 2003, 267).

³⁶ See Frankfurter 1990; Grünbart 2018.

³⁷ Frankfurter 1990.

3. The “Legend of Aphroditianus” – a missing link in the history of religious sharing in Late Antique Hierapolis?

The so-called *Legend of Aphroditianus* presents an imaginative narrative about the magi who came to worship the newborn Christ, in Bethlehem with his mother Mary, according to the *Gospel of Matthew* 2:1–12.³⁸ The transmission history of the legend is complex but does clearly point to an origin in Western Syria. The Greek text was used liturgically as a table reading by the Patriarch of Antioch. It was incorporated into a fictional novel composed in Syria and John Damascene cited this legend in a Christmas sermon. It is much more difficult, however, to determine when the legend was created. The *terminus ante quem* is most probably given by the *Historia Christiana* of Philip of Side in the 420s,³⁹ but before that, any date seems possible.

In its first part, presenting the story of what happened shortly before the biblical veneration of the magi, the legend describes miraculous events in a temple of Hera in Persia: singing and dancing statues of the gods giving oracles, the appearance of a star above the statue of Hera, the announcement of a divine birth in Bethlehem, and the falling down of all the statues in veneration before the goddess. In the second part, the legend tells of the magi’s journey to Judaea, their encounter with Mary and her child in Bethlehem, and their return home. The point of the legend is that the magi bring home from Bethlehem a portrait image of Mary and Jesus and place it in the temple where the images of the gods have given oracles and fallen down before the statue of Hera. The accompanying inscription is said to have read: “In the heaven-sent temple,⁴⁰ the power of Persia dedicated this to Zeus Helios, the great God, King Jesus.”⁴¹ The images of the Hellenistic gods are thus replaced – or simply complemented – by an icon of Mary and Jesus in the sanctuary.

³⁸ English translation and commentary: Heyden 2016; Greek and church Slavonic text versions with German translation: Heyden 2009, 308–359. The name is explained by the fact that in the 5th- or 6th-century Greek *De gestis in Perside* this legend is attributed to Aphroditianus, the philosopher and arbiter in the disputation between Hellenes, Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews (see Heyden 2020b). There is a kindred apocryphon in Syriac, called “The Revelation of the Magi” by Brent Landau (2014; 2016), which provides a slightly different but comparable story of the revelation of the star and the magi’s journey to Bethlehem.

³⁹ See Heyden 2006.

⁴⁰ Some Slavonic manuscripts read “in the divine temple of Dionysos and Hera” instead of “heaven-sent”.

⁴¹ *Legend of Aphroditianus* 8.5: καὶ ἀνετέθη ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, ἐν ᾧ ἐχρηματίσθη ἐν τῷ διοπετεῖ ἱερῷ Διὶ Ἡλίῳ θεῷ μεγάλῳ βασιλεῖ Ἰησοῦ τὸ Περσικὸν κράτος ἀνέθηκεν (transl. Heyden 2016, 17).

The legend presents itself as a trustworthy copy of a report, which is “inscribed upon the golden tablets and laid up in the royal temples”.⁴² However, there can be no doubt about its fictional character, which is to be recognized by the fact that a temple of Hera in Persia is historically impossible. At best, it is an *interpretatio Graeca* of an Oriental mother deity. It is therefore all the more important to ask ourselves in what context and with what intention such a story was created. This is where Hierapolis/Mabbug and *On the Syrian Goddess* become important.

3.1. Striking parallels

In the first part of the *Legend of Aphroditianus*, striking parallels to the description of the cult in Hierapolis in *On the Syrian Goddess* appear:

Firstly, as *On the Syrian Goddess* did, the *Legend of Aphroditianus* also emphasizes the rich and expensive furnishings of the temple, which is said to have been built by king Cyrus.⁴³ It mentions the statues made of gold and silver and the precious stones found all over the temple, which corresponds to what is found in *On the Syrian Goddess*.⁴⁴

Secondly, in the *Legend of Aphroditianus*, it seems to be almost normal that the images of the gods sing and dance in the temple of their own accord – a fact that is considered particularly worthy of mention in *On the Syrian Goddess*.⁴⁵

Thirdly, in both accounts, the main deity in the sanctuary is called Hera, and is at the same time given many other female deity names: Athena, Aphrodite, Selene, Rhea, Artemis, Nemesis, and the Fates in *On the Syrian Goddess*; Πηγῆ (“Source, Fountain”), Μυρία (“Thousandfold”), Tyche, and Karia in the *Legend of Aphroditianus*. Both sources describe her as Ὀυρανία, the Queen of Heaven.⁴⁶

Fourthly, the description of the statue fits the epithet of Urania: both sources mention a crown on her head made of precious stones, which illuminates the whole temple with its bright light.⁴⁷

Fifthly, both accounts pay special attention to the Sun God Ἥλιος. *On the Syrian Goddess* relates that in Hierapolis there is a throne of Helios but no statue or image of that God because everybody can see him with their own eyes. Instead, there is a statue of Apollo, a sun god as well, beyond the empty throne of

⁴² *Legend of Aphroditianus* 1.1: ὡς γὰρ ἐν ταῖς χρυσαῖς ἀρκλαρίαις κεκόλαπται καὶ κείνται ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς βασιλείοις (transl. Heyden 2016, 11).

⁴³ *Legend of Aphroditianus* 1.2.

⁴⁴ Cf. *On the Syrian Goddess* 10 and *Legend of Aphroditianus* 1.

⁴⁵ Cf. *On the Syrian Goddess* 10 and 36, and *Legend of Aphroditianus* 2–5.

⁴⁶ Cf. *On the Syrian Goddess* 32 and *Legend of Aphroditianus* 2. 4, 5.

⁴⁷ Cf. *On the Syrian Goddess* 32 and *Legend of Aphroditianus* 1.3 and 1.5.

Helios.⁴⁸ The *Legend of Aphroditianus* does not mention a statue of Helios per se, but it does emphasize the motif of heavenly marriage between Hera-Pege and Zeus-Helios. In fact, this marriage is the crucial event that provokes the joyful excitement among the statues of the gods, i. e., their singing and dancing.

Sixthly, fish play an important role in both texts. Lucian mentions that the fish in the lake respond to their names, and that one of them was extremely large and adorned with a precious stone. The *Legend of Aphroditianus* says of Hera-Pege: “a spring of water continuously sends forth a spring of spirit containing a single fish, which is taken with the hook of divinity and which sustains with its own flesh the whole world, dwelling there as though in the sea”.⁴⁹ In the broader context of the legend it becomes clear that this fish (ἰχθύς) is an allusion to the famous acronym “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Redeemer”.⁵⁰

Last but not least, the role of Dionysus should be mentioned. The author of *On the Syrian Goddess* tries to show that the god is the real founder of the sanctuary of Hierapolis.⁵¹ In the *Legend of Aphroditianus*, Dionysus appears in the middle of the night to explain to the other deities the significance of the miraculous events. He proclaims that the end of their veneration has come, because the goddess Hera-Pege “is no longer one of us, but she stands far above us, since far above us she gives birth to a human being, the fetus of divine Fortune (Tyche). [...] Removed from us is the honor. Inglorious and unrecompensed we have become, and one only has received her proper honor.”⁵² This proclamation then prompts the gods to venerate Hera-Pege as the “Mistress, Spring-Bearer and Mother of the heavenly light-giver” (Κυρία Πηγὴ ναματοφόρε, ἡ οὐρανίου φωστήρος γεναμένη μήτηρ), and the Persian King to send out the magi to Bethlehem to worship the newborn who was announced in his temple – this turns out to be Jesus the son of Mary in the second part of the Legend.

These parallels raise the question of whether this legend offers indications of a competitive sharing of the cult of Hierapolis in Late Antiquity – and if so, what the nature of this sharing exactly was. Eduard Bratke, who first recognized certain similarities between the two works, interpreted the *Legend of Aphroditianus* as an ironic Christian replica of Lucian’s writing and as an apologetic transformation of the very popular cult of Hierapolis.⁵³ Bratke, however, did not say anything about the reason why an unknown Christian author might have

48 *On the Syrian Goddess* 34–37.

49 Cf. *On the Syrian Goddess* 45 and *Legend of Aphroditianus* 2.

50 On the fish symbol in early Christianity, see Engemann 1969.

51 *On the Syrian Goddess* 16.

52 *Legend of Aphroditianus* 5: Πηγὴ οὐκέτι μία ἐξ ἡμῶν ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς χρηματίζει, ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς τινα γενῶσα ἀνθρωπον θείας ὄντα σύλλημα Τύχης. [...] ἤρθη ἀφ’ ἡμῶν ἡ τιμὴ· ἄδοξοι καὶ ἀγέραστοι γεγόναμεν, εἰς μόνος ἐκ πάντων τὴν ἰδίαν ἀναλαβῶν τιμὴν. (transl. Heyden 2016, 14).

53 Bratke 1899.

written this parody and in what historical context this might have happened. To get an idea as to whether or not the legend can fill the gap in the evidence regarding the cult of Hierapolis, we need to precisely ask these questions, which are of course interrelated.

The first observation regards the very character of the parallels between the two works. Even though there are clear similarities, there is no literal correspondence and also no direct reference to *On the Syrian Goddess* in the *Legend of Aphroditianus*. Does anything at all suggest the possibility of an intertextual relationship here? From my point of view, the clear but vague parallels between the texts can be very plausibly explained if we assume that both writings refer, in different ways and maybe at different times, to the cult practice the authors found in Hierapolis. The following point could reinforce this idea: the epithet for the goddess that is most disputed among the gods in the *Legend of Aphroditianus* is that of Πηγῆ. Her being “source, fountain” is indeed the decisive trigger for the veneration of the images of the gods and their subordination to her. Interestingly, though, the Πηγῆ-motif does not play any role in *On the Syrian Goddess*. However, the Assyrian name of the town, Mabbug, is clearly derived from the Assyrian root *mb'*, which means “bubble, swell”, and the sacred lake was most probably fed by a spring that welled up in the sanctuary.⁵⁴ At this point, I conclude, the *Legend of Aphroditianus* refers to knowledge that it cannot have taken from *On the Syrian Goddess* but is clearly connected to the place of Hierapolis/Mabbug. This does not exclude, of course, that the author knew *On the Syrian Goddess* at all, but it means that he could not have got all his information exclusively from that work.

3.2. Dating the legend

Dating the legend becomes all the more relevant when we consider that, assuming the tale refers to a living cult, it might help us draw conclusions about the duration of cultic life in Hierapolis. So, when could this story have first been written? To avoid circular reasoning, we must look for hints from outside *On the Syrian Goddess*.

An early date is probably supported by the almost literal correspondences between the epitaph of Abercius from the early 3rd century, in which the motifs of spring, fish, and food occur, and the *Legend of Aphroditianus*.⁵⁵ In addition, the *Revelation of the Magi*, written, according to Brent Landau, in Syriac in Edessa in the 2nd or 3rd century, was probably intended to demonstrate the connectivity of Christianity with pre-Christian religious traditions of the Orient.

⁵⁴ See Goossens 1943.

⁵⁵ Heyden 2009, 243–261.

One could regard the *Revelation of the Magi* and the *Legend of Aphroditianus* as two complementary apocryphal narratives, which in Late Antique Syria – a linguistically, culturally, and religiously diverse world – took the biblical magi pericope as an opportunity to accommodate Christianity to previous and existing religious traditions.

Another clue could be that the philosopher and theologian Bardaisan lived in Hierapolis and received his education there.⁵⁶ According to later Syrian tradition, Bardaisan was even a priest of the Dea Syria before he became Christian and returned to Edessa. Even if we cannot prove that it was a historical fact, this tradition shows that the sanctuary of Hierapolis had a history with (some) Syrian Christians. This tradition also points to yet another direction: when Bardaisan returned from Hierapolis to his hometown of Edessa and became advisor to king Abgar VII, the famous Abgar-Legend is said to have been written in his circle.⁵⁷ It is important to notice that this legend contains a feature strikingly similar to the *Legend of Aphroditianus*: in both texts, an authentic image – of Jesus in the first, of Mary with the infant Jesus in the second – is brought to the respective city. We know how important the Mandyllion of Edessa became for the history and piety of that city.⁵⁸ Is the *Legend of Aphroditianus* to be regarded as something comparable to the *Legend of Abgar*? Does it offer the etiological tale of an actually existing cult of an image of Mary at Hierapolis? This is a natural assumption, if not demonstrable: unlike for Edessa, we have no evidence for such an image in Hierapolis. (In contrast, a copy of the Edessenian Mandyllion, an imprint on a brick stone, the famous kerameion, is said to have been in Hierapolis in the 9th century).⁵⁹

However, it remains questionable whether the intensity of Marian devotion, as expressed in the *Legend of Aphroditianus*, is already conceivable in the 2nd/3rd century. Overall, it cannot be excluded that the *Legend of Aphroditianus* was composed later, in the 4th/5th century, using older material – as is the case also of the *Legend of Abgar*, first recorded in the *Doctrina Addai*.⁶⁰ What we do know for sure, however, is that the *Legend of Aphroditianus* was continuously revisited and reused: in the early 5th century in the *Christian History* of Philip of Side, in the 6th century in the *De Gestis in Perside*, a fictional report about a religious conference at the Sassanian court, and in the 7th century in a Christmas homily

56 See Possekkel 2007 and Thomassen 2018; on the influence of Persian thinking and narrative traditions about the Magi on Bardaisan, see Jurasz 2014.

57 See Ramelli 2009.

58 See Cameron 1983; Guscini 2009; Eastmond 2015.

59 Leo Diaconus 70–71 (IV, 10).

60 See Mircovic 2004; Corke-Webster 2017; on the possible origins of the Abgar Legend, see Ramelli 2014.

by John of Damascus.⁶¹ This shows that the legend enjoyed popularity throughout Late Antiquity.

All of this does not mean, though, that cultic activity in the sanctuary of Hierapolis was intact throughout this period. Yet, we have no evidence that the cult was abandoned, or the sanctuary closed at a certain point in history. Since almost all public buildings in the town were destroyed by earthquakes in the 8th century, it is impossible to know whether a church was ever built in the sacred area. Alternatively, it is possible that Christians did not become dominant in the city of Hierapolis at all until the Arab conquest of Syria, and that religious coexistence and variety simply continued to be the norm. With regard to the connectivity of pre-Christian and Christian stylites, David Frankfurter states: “We must regard the rural Syria of Late Antiquity as containing a religious culture, a complex of traditions, not a singular and monolithic ‘paganism’.”⁶² With this statement, Frankfurter rightly questions the research paradigm of the “survival of paganism” in Late Antiquity. “In religion”, he concludes, “continuity is by necessity change, and the ‘novel’ is always what is most vividly traditional.”⁶³ This shift also implies that we no longer look for clear successions, transitions, or transformations from “pagan” to “Christian” cult practices, but rather seek to identify and explain overlapping and intermingling practices and identities of persons and places.

What does it mean to apply these general statements to the question of the relation between the veneration of the Dea Syria in Hierapolis and the *Legend of Aphroditianus*? If we imagine a continuous adaptation and transformation of cultic and cultural traditions, as was always typical of Syrian society, the *Legend of Aphroditianus* turns out to be indeed the missing link between the 2nd- and the 6th-century Hierapolis. Read in this light, the legend testifies to a certain sharing of the Hierapolitan cult tradition by Christians. The exact character of this sharing remains to be discussed.

4. What kind of sharing in Hierapolis?

Since other sources, especially archaeological ones, are lacking, it remains impossible to determine whether this sharing took place on a literary level alone, or whether the *Legend of Aphroditianus* also reflected an actual sharing of the cultic site. That does not mean, though, that we cannot learn anything about competitive sharing from this case at all. It should encourage us, on the contrary, to

⁶¹ For a comprehensive discussion of the reception history of the *Legend of Aphroditianus*, see Heyden 2009.

⁶² Frankfurter 1990, 179.

⁶³ Frankfurter 1990, 191.

explore and evaluate the various possibilities of competitive sharing and antagonistic tolerance in Late Antique Hierapolis.

4.1. Supersessionary appropriation

By falling down in front of the statue of Hera-Pege, the images of the gods themselves acknowledge that the time of their being venerated has come to an end. Thus, the images of the gods are taken into service of the Christian truth, and they bear witness against themselves. In this tale, the pagan deities are forced to become prophets, and even worshipers, of Christ and Mary. This technique of appropriation and supersession is very popular in Late Ancient Christian apologetics.⁶⁴ It is sometimes referred to as *interpretatio christiana*,⁶⁵ but this kind of interpretation does not content itself, like the *interpretatio graeca* or *romana*, with identifying the own gods (if we can call Christ, or Mary, gods) with deities of other traditions. This type of interpretation goes one step further in claiming that those deities themselves deliberately abolish their being worshiped, as they realize that they are not gods at all. Re-semanticization would be probably the more apt term to describe this type of interpretation.

The superiority of Mary the mother of Jesus over Hera-Pege is made manifest in the fact that the magi have a portrait image of Mary and Jesus affixed to the temple after their return from Judaea – and this as well is an act of supersessionary appropriation of that cult and sanctuary. The legend does not specify whether the images of the gods were replaced or just supplemented with the icon of Mary and Jesus, but the scene leaves no doubt about the fact that this was an image of higher dignity than the dancing and singing statues formerly in that temple.

A third aspect is the setting of events in Persia. If it is true that the narrative originated in North-Western Syria and was inspired by the cult of Hierapolis, then it is necessary to ask why the events in the temple are located in Persia. We have noted that Hierapolis was the military headquarters for the Oriental campaigns of Roman emperors in Late Antiquity. It was from here that the emperors set out against Persia, not only the military archenemy of the Roman Empire, but at the same time a place of alternative religious orientation which sometimes attracted people from the West. We know that Neoplatonic philosophers lived in the city of Hierapolis and that it became a place of encounter between Hellenistic and Persian culture because of its location. “From Persia Christ was known

⁶⁴ On this well-known strategy, see most recently Adrahtas 2021, and the essays in Nisula, Iriza, Laato 2021.

⁶⁵ See Eberlein 2006.

from the beginning, for nothing escapes the learned lawyers of that country”,⁶⁶ is the very first sentence of the *Legend of Aphroditianus*, and it uses Persia and its image as a place of great wisdom in order to appropriate the “pagan” cult of a female goddess, replacing it by something greater at the same time.

By this threefold supersessionary appropriation, the *Legend of Aphroditianus* testifies to a subtle mode of what we can very aptly call the competitive sharing of a religious site. The question that remains is whether this competitive sharing must be understood as a mere literary fiction or whether it can be envisioned as taking place in reality.

4.2. Literary or actual competitive sharing?

We know little about the balance of power and the numbers of religious communities in Late Antique Hierapolis. General estimates suggest that perhaps fifty percent of Syria’s population was Christian by the middle of the 5th century.⁶⁷ The sanctuary and the sacred lake of Hierapolis must have occupied a large space in the city (see fig. 2). Even if we do not know whether the readers of the *Legend of Aphroditianus* ever actually entered the temple, we should imagine that whoever lived in the region or visited the city was aware of its cultic heritage (if not a still-intact cult).

In this context, it is perhaps not really critical to determine whether we are dealing with a physical sharing in cult activity “on the ground”, as it were, or with a “spiritual” sharing in oral, and later written, legends. In a sense, tales and texts can also be places of religious sharing. Given the complex religious history of Northern Syria and the presence of a certain cultural traditionalism in the rural regions, we must be careful not to think of religious identities as being too fixed or stable there.

Syria witnessed fluid religious identities, and it is especially in shared holy places that we can observe such fluid identities: for the (limited) time of sharing, identity is not shaped through correct demarcations – be they defined by theologians of their time or scholars of religious history in ours –, but rather by the current, and transient, ritual community. Christians in Hierapolis could very well have harmonized the veneration of Mary with elements and motifs of the Hellenized cult of the *Dea Syria*.

This could have been the case in purely literary terms. Imagine the Christians of Hierapolis witnessing the daily worship and the great festivals in the temple and at the sacred lake. The city must have been full of pilgrims. The

66 *Legend of Aphroditianus* 1: Ἐκ Περσίδος ἐγνώσθη Χριστὸς ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς. οὐδὲν γὰρ λανθάνει τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ νομομαθεῖς ἅπαντα φιλοπονούντας. (transl. Heyden 2016, 11).

67 Todt, Vest 2014.

Christians did perhaps not participate actively, rather observing what was going on – and telling each other stories to prove the superiority of Mary, the mother of Jesus, over the mother goddess worshiped by their neighbors. We could call this a kind of “spiritually antagonistic tolerance”. Purveyors of that kind of competitive sharing do not have the power to prevent cultic practices of others in real life, but they can claim interpretive sovereignty over cultic practices for themselves, and they can do so by inventing supersessionary traditions like the *Legend of Aphroditianus*.

The most common explanation would probably be that such a legend was invented in connection with the conversion of the pagan temple into a church. However, we know nothing about a church as a successor building of the temple of *Dea Syria* in Hierapolis. We also do not know, as mentioned above, whether the Christians ever clearly had power in the city – not to speak of the diversity among Christian groups itself, with which we must also reckon.

Therefore, we should also try to imagine for a moment that not all Christians avoided entering the sanctuary. Maybe at least some of them sought their place in it, perhaps even decorating it with a cult image. If we follow this idea, then the legend would legitimize the participation in the festivals and traditions of the popular regional cult center while at the same time claiming the superiority of the Christian truth. By providing such a legitimation, it would distinguish itself from the polemics of a John Chrysostom and other Christian preachers and polemicists against “Hellenizing” or “Judaizing” Christians.

In order to demonstrate that such an idea is not pure fantasy, it will be useful to come back to the limestone mold with the representation of Urania (fig. 1). The Christian author Epiphanius of Salamis, in his 4th-century *Panarion*, reports of certain Syrian Christians, called Kollyriandrians, who worshiped Mary as the Queen of Heaven (Urania) and offered cakes to her.⁶⁸ If the assumption that our limestone mold was used to imprint soft materials like cakes is correct – as we know it was the case of the sanctuary of Abraham in Mamre – then we may have here not only literary but also archaeological evidence for Marian devotion in continuity with regional Syrian cultic traditions. This could maybe also explain the stark reaction of certain Antiochian theologians against the liturgical veneration of Mary as the “Mother of God”.

68 Epiphanius of Salamis, *Against heresies* 79.1 (in Dummer, Holl 1985, 475–476); cf. Isidore of Pelusium, *Letter* 56 (PG 78, 215–218). With reference to these, Frazer 1979, 142 also interprets the woman on the mold as the Virgin assimilated with Atargatis/Hera and Aphrodite Urania.

4.3. Tolerance, competition, co-production

On whatever level the competitive sharing in Hierapolis may have existed, I have tried to show that we should not operate with sharp religious demarcations and hermetically sealed notions of belonging when tentatively applying the model of “antagonistic tolerance” to such cases as Hierapolis. What notions of “identity” do we apply when asking the question, “Who tolerates whom?” The notion of belonging to the city and region was perhaps more important to people of that time than some unique religious belonging or “identity”. In the end, the very concept of a single religious identity appears to be a distinctively Judeo-Christian religious concept, a concept not suitable for grasping the diversity and permeability of “paganism” (another Judeo-Christian concept) at all. Given the fact that the city of Hierapolis was a regional cult center with a long tradition, it is very reasonable to assume that Christians tried to reconcile this tradition with Christian doctrine (or what they understood of it). The manner in which they did so can well be described as competitive sharing, even if that sharing took place only or mainly on a literary or semantic level. Understanding such processes as processes of religious co-production may even be perhaps more appropriate.⁶⁹ The concept of tolerance, in contrast, presupposes power relations and clear religious identities, and there are good reasons to question if this really applies to the case of Hierapolis and to Late Antique Northern Syria in general.

With regard to the aforementioned sanctuary of Abraham at Mamre near Hebron, I have proposed elsewhere differentiating three different but interrelated ways by which a place can be sanctified: structural layout, cultic performance, and the semantic interpretation of the site.⁷⁰ If we apply this distinction to Late Antique Hierapolis/Mabbug, because of the scarce evidence provided by the sources, we could easily conclude that there is no confirmation of Christians actually participating in structural preservations or modifications of the sanctuary of the Dea Syria. Yet, thanks to the *Legend of Aphroditianus*, we do have reasonably good evidence that they appropriated the veneration of the Syrian mother deity on the interpretive or semantic level by making her the model for Mary, the Mother of God. As far as the middle category, cultic performance in place, is

⁶⁹ The concept of co-production has not yet been sufficiently elaborated within the history of religions, despite an increase in interest in the interactions and entanglements of religious communities throughout history. I will tackle this desideratum as it relates to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the years to come together with David Nirenberg in our research project: “Interactive Histories, Co-Produced Communities”. Religious co-production is not limited to those three traditions, though. The phenomenon of the sharing of religious sites between “pagans” and Christians in Late Antiquity is also ideally suited to studying the function and effects of co-production – a claim which I hope can be supported by the present study in the case of Hierapolis-Mabbug.

⁷⁰ Heyden 2020a.

concerned, we cannot get beyond speculation. This means that whether or not we assume actual sharing at Late Antique Hierapolis probably says more about our own desires for interreligious living together in our own times than it does about our source-based knowledge of the past.

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Fig. 1: Two-sided mold, 4th to 5th century, limestone, 13.8 cm diameter. Malcove Collection M82.271, Gift of Dr. Lillian Malcove, 1981. Courtesy Art Museum University of Toronto. Photo: Toni Hafkenschied.

Fig. 2: Modern Membij, Ross Burns (Wright 2012, 194).

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“Heretical Places” in Ancient Heresiology

Two Cases of “Competitive Sharing” in the *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis?

Gaetano Spampinato

1. Introduction

In one of the latest volumes of the Italian journal *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, the monographic section is entitled: *Loca Haereticorum. La geografia dell'eresia nel Mediterraneo tardoantico*. This section, containing the papers of the 5th International Conference FIRB that took place in November 2016,¹ focuses on the different places frequented by “heretical”² groups in Late Antiquity around the Mediterranean basin, from east to west.³ A common topic of reflection in the various contributions is the representation of these places as “non-places” in the various sources analyzed. To explain this feature of anti-heretical representations, Tessa Canella and Mar Marcos, in the introductory part of the section, use the expression “Late Antique heterotopy”.⁴ The expression “heterotopy” is taken from Michel Foucault’s *Les hétérotopies. Les corps utopiques*, an expression through which the French philosopher indicates the “absolutely other spaces”. While the non-places of utopias do not belong to any place, the non-

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1 On this conference and on the project, see the introduction to the volume by Carnevale 2019. Studies on the “spaces of heresy” were already conducted in the past, in the context of historical reconstructions of the places frequented by heretics, in the perspective of the dispute between the “Orthodox” and the various “heterodox” groups in urban contexts, or (more recently) with an interest in the rhetorical construction of this opposition – on this subject, see the recent article of Berzon 2017. However, the volume *Loca Haereticorum* has the merit of giving a unified perspective and a broad overview of the issue, returning at the same time to the various issues raised in previous studies.

2 I use here the terms “heresy” and “heretic” for the sake of convenience, although I am aware of the problematic nature of these terms. On the debate on the use of these terms, see the recent contributions of Pesce 2014 and 2018, 67–84.

3 For example, the heretical spaces in Alexandria (Wipszycka 2019), the spatial spread of the Donatist community in Rome (Canella 2019), the places attended by heretics in Constantinople (Bossina 2019), and so on.

4 Canella, Marcos 2019, 10.

places of heterotopy are characterized by their complete “otherness” and diversity in relation to reality.⁵

According to the two historians, the heterotopical perspective on heretical places in Late Antiquity encompasses two important aspects linked to the polemic against heterodox groups: on the one hand, the “converted nature” of the heretics and of their places, on a moral and ideological level; on the other hand, on the level of spatial definition, the “imagined character” of heretical places, which are often either invented or reconstructed from the polemical perspective of the authors who give us information about them. This polemical strategy used in relation to heretical places would more generally characterize the depiction of heretics as deviant figures, according to Alessandro Saggioro.⁶

The representation of heretical spaces as “non-places” assumes a particular relevance in Late Antique heresiology, since it becomes an important issue for the identification and classification of religious groups and their respective places of worship. The author on whom I will focus, Epiphanius of Salamis, represents an exemplary case:⁷ the Cypriot bishop, author of the *Panarion* (“medicine chest”),⁸ an encyclopedic treatise against all heresies from the creation of Adam to his own times, often dedicates a large space in displaying the places attended by the heretics he is writing about.⁹ In Epiphanius heretical places are also depicted as “non-places”, characterized by what could be defined as “the distance factor”. This distance can be of a spatial nature: an isolated place would reveal the “ideological” remoteness of the heretics who frequent it. This is the case of Pepouza, the “Jerusalem” of the prophetic Montanist movement, a faraway location in Phrygia where, according to the heresiologist, absurdities took place: women bishops, strange incubation rites, Eucharist with cheese.¹⁰ In his portray-

5 For this reason, when speaking of “heterotopy” it would be more precise to refer to “anti-places” – as Saggioro 2019 does in Italian using the expression “anti-luoghi”.

6 See Saggioro 2019, 47: “In generale, gli eretici, alla stregua di altre tipologie devianti, subiscono una connotazione negativa nell’intero corpus di leggi. Sono individuate nel corpo sociale complessivo in una dialettica forte fra identità e alterità. Questa dialettica si gioca su due piani: quello dell’annichilimento e dissimulazione della presenza e quello dell’allontanamento.”

7 On Epiphanius and the literary and heresiological context of the *Panarion*, see the recent general introductions of Aragione 2010 and Jacobs 2016.

8 Translations of the *Panarion* are taken from the edition of Williams (2009 and 2013). Unless indicated otherwise, translations of the other Greek texts are mine.

9 Epiphanius’ interest in the representation of the rituals, places, but also in the customs of the heretics he is writing about is a trait that is also found in other heresiologists and stems from the influence of the ethnographic genre. In this regard, see Berzon 2016.

10 See *Panarion* 49.1.4: “And so even to this day, they say, certain women – men too – are initiated there on the site, so that those women or men may await Christ and see him”; and *Panarion* 49.2.5–6: “They have woman bishops, presbyters and the rest [...]. However, they call them Artotyrites because they set forth bread and cheese in their mysteries and celebrate

al of Pepouza and its strange visitors, Epiphanius describes the town as "a deserted spot in Phrygia", abandoned and even "now levelled", and he therefore insists on its spatial remoteness.¹¹ Thus, the distance of Pepouza, with its bizarre rituals and ridiculous customs, would physically represent the concrete and moral remoteness from orthodoxy of the Pepouzian Montanists. However, this polemical representation has also been applied to specific areas in urban centers which are attended by heretical groups. I only mention here the curious case of the Adamians, which we encounter in chapter fifty-two of the *Panarion*. Those heretics, according to the Cypriot bishop, used to meet in the hypocausts of public baths in total nudity – inspired by the original nudity of Adam – and to celebrate there their rites.¹² In this case, in addition to the nudity, it is precisely the frequentation of a hypocaust that constitutes one of the main reasons for the stigmatization of the group: Epiphanius, in fact, underlines the hidden and reserved nature of such places, which would also reflect the licentiousness and the promiscuity of these heretics.¹³

Examples of such a polemical discourse about the places attended by heretics are numerous in the *Panarion*, since, as mentioned above, the Cypriot bishop accords a great importance to the representation of heretical places, which constitutes a crucial point of his anti-heretical polemic.¹⁴ However, if the places described in the treatise are very often marked by an exclusively-heretical frequentation, it is possible to find some cases where Epiphanius represents certain places as shared by both the heretics and other groups, whether "adversaries"

their mysteries with them." Epiphanius previously quotes an oracle of Priscilla or Quintilla, in which the prophetess affirms that she has witnessed an apparition of Christ "in the form of a woman" who had announced the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem to that place; see *Panarion* 49.1.3.

11 *Panarion* 48.14.1. On the sanctuary-city of Pepouza and the nearby city of Tymion, mentioned by the anti-Montanist Apollonius (who is quoted by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* 5.18.2), several studies were conducted. The most important and complete essay on the subject remains that of Tabbernee, Lampe 2008.

12 *Panarion* 52.2.1–2: "In the first place, they say that these people build their churches – or dens and caves; that is what I would call the meetings of the sects – in hypocausts [...]. And they each, whether man or woman, undress outside as they come in, and enter with their whole bodies as naked as the day they were born" (the translation is here adapted). Epiphanius is rather unclear in the description of the hypocaust. This confusion shows how the mention of this place in a ritual context should be read as an invention of the author himself. Moreover, the labelling of these "churches" of the heretics as "caves" must be noted. We shall also encounter it in relation to the Messalians.

13 Nudity and promiscuity are polemically used by Epiphanius for other heresies, for example the Gnostics (*Panarion* 26.5.7) or Messalians.

14 The representation of the places frequented by the heretics will also play an important role in the polemical representations of the authors who, in their heresiological works, were influenced by the work of the Cypriot bishop, both in Eastern and in Western heresiology.

(Jews or pagans) or even Orthodox Christians. The polemical perspectives of the heresiologist seem to differ depending on the nature of this sharing.

In this chapter I will analyze two cases from the *Panarion* that reflect the different strategies used by the heresiologist in his polemical discourse: the sanctuary of the master Epiphanes in Cephalonia, attended by Gnostics and by the inhabitants of the island, and the monasteries in Syria and Cappadocia frequented by some ascetic heretics, the Messalians, as well as “Orthodox monks”. As we shall see, while in the first case the heresiologist focuses on the assimilation of the different groups in order to underline the deviance of the heretics, in the second one he tries to explain the causes of this sharing through certain rhetorical strategies, aimed at clarifying the reasons and circumstances of such a phenomenon and at encouraging the prevention of such situations.

Especially in the case of the sanctuary of Epiphanes, the places depicted in the anti-heretical treatise are invented places, or rather, places which are (re) created by the heresiologist, beyond their historical and spatial reality, in order to reinforce and legitimate his polemical perspective. Regarding the spatial categories proposed in the methodological introduction to this volume, I shall use here the category of “religious site” to refer to the precise, defined, and circumscribed places represented by the heresiologist (that is, the sanctuary, with all its various buildings, and the monasteries), while I shall refer to “religious space” when speaking of the expansion of these places in the territory, and of their religious influence – especially in the case of the Messalians. On this latter topic, the present reflection will examine more particularly the solution to the problem posed by such a sharing, which Epiphanius as a bishop and a heresiologist proposes. The analysis will also address, whenever possible, other kinds of reaction by ecclesiastical authorities, mainly in the cases of the monasteries “infected” by the Messalians.

2. Mixing to condemn: the sanctuary of Epiphanes in Cephalonia

In the wider polemic against the various groups of the so-called Gnosticism,¹⁵ Epiphanius dedicates the chapter thirty-two of the *Panarion* to the presentation and refutation of the doctrine of the master Secundus. Evoking the Secundian school, the heresiologist mentions one of Secundus’ disciples (later on in his life, master himself), Epiphanes, who “copied Secundus’ poison, that is, his wordy

15 The category of “Gnosticism” is very problematic in terms of reconstructing the different movements of early Christianity and it also derives from the tendency of heresiologists to catalogue and draw genealogies between the different heretical groups. On this subject, see Robertson 2021.

babble of baneful, reptilian corruption" (*Panarion* 32.3.9).¹⁶ This disciple, *enfant prodige* of the school of Secundus, is said to have been the son of another famous Gnostic master, Carpocrates, and the *protégé* of the Gnostic-Platonic Isidore.¹⁷

In the *Panarion*, Epiphanius describes Epiphanes as a very young master, who taught in his homeland, the Greek island of Cephalonia, where he died at the age of seventeen. After his premature death, Epiphanius observes, his error has continued to be diffused through his disciples. In the city of Same, in fact, a sanctuary has been erected in his honor, with a temple, an altar, and also a school: "At Same he is still honored as a god, even today; the locals have established a sanctuary (τέμενος) for him and offer sacrifices and rites (θυσίας καὶ τελετάς) every new moon (κατὰ νεομηνίαν), and have put up altars (βωμούς) to him and founded a well-known school (μουσεῖον) in his name, the so-called School of Epiphanes (Επιφάνους Μουσεῖον)."¹⁸

More than a century and a half before the *Panarion* was composed, Clement of Alexandria, in the *Stromata*, already spoke of Epiphanes, of his connection with his father Carpocrates, from whom he had received an extensive Platonic education, of his preaching in Cephalonia, and of his deification after his death.¹⁹ The Alexandrian, moreover, mentioned the erection of a temple in honor of the master, with altars, and a school: "The Cephallenians gather at the temple (εἰς τὸ ἱερόν) every new moon and celebrate with sacrifices the day when Epiphanes became a god at his birthday (γενέθλιον); they pour libations to him, feast in his honor, and sing his praises."²⁰

In his depiction of this cult of Epiphanes in Cephalonia, Epiphanius, who seems to be familiar with Clement's description, is nevertheless much more detailed in the description of the places and rites in honor of the young master.

16 On the Secundian Gnostic school, see the contributions of Guillaumont 1974, Stroumsa 1998 and, more recently, of Prinzivalli 2006 (on the problematic figure of Epiphanes), and of Ramelli 2008 (on Secundus and his school).

17 It is not easy to investigate the figure of Epiphanes. Before Clement of Alexandria, the first to mention Epiphanes (*infra*), both the treatise *Against the heresies* of Irenaeus of Lyon (1.11.3) and the *Refutatio* (6.38.2), evoking the different masters of Gnosticism stated: "Another famous master of theirs thus says" (ἄλλος δέ τις ἐπιφανῆς διδάσκαλος αὐτῶν). The term ἐπιφανῆς is commonly read as "famous", "illustrious"; however, some authors read the term as Ἐπιφάνης, "Epiphanes", thus seeing in these passages the first testimonies of the Gnostic teacher – see Williams 2009, 208.

18 *Panarion* 32.3.5. Williams' translation is here adapted.

19 See *Stromata* 3.2.5.1–2: "But the followers of Carpocrates and Epiphanes think that wives should be common property. [...] This fellow Epiphanes, whose writings I have at hand, was a son of Carpocrates and his mother was named Alexandria. On his father's side he was an Alexandrine, on his mother's a Cephallenian. He lived in all only seventeen years, and at Same in Cephallenia was honoured as a god".

20 *Stromata* 3.2.5.2. Translations of the *Stromata* are taken from the edition of Oulton 1954. The translation is here adapted.

Naturally, this alleged cult of Epiphanes led to a debate among scholars about the reliability of Epiphanius' words: the personal worshiping of a heresiarch, to whom a form of cult could indeed be instituted, is in fact a widespread aspect of heresiology, as encountered, for example in the polemic against Simon of Samaria.²¹ However, the way in which Epiphanes' sanctuary is represented in Epiphanius' work performs a specific function in the latter's polemical strategy: the author indeed uses a vocabulary that is strongly related to pagan imagery to describe the sanctuary of the Gnostic master.

For instance, in contrast to Clement, who merely mentions a generic "temple" (ἱερόν) in honor of Epiphanes, Epiphanius uses the term τέμενος, which is always employed in the *Panarion* with the meaning of "idol sanctuary", mostly in the Egyptian context.²² Likewise, βωμός is a term which, not only in Epiphanius but also in other Late Antique Christian authors, often precisely indicates the altars of pagan gods, in opposition to Christian θυσιαστήριον or τράπεζα.²³ Furthermore, it is interesting to also note the presence of the term μουσεῖον, already found in the *Stromata*. This term, originally meaning "temple of the Muses", very rarely occurs in ancient Christian authors, but is still used by Late Ancient philosophers and orators to indicate a precise building of philosophical and traditional παιδεία. For example, in his autobiographical oration (*Orations* 1.35), while recalling the great success of his activity as a rhetorician in Nicomedia, Libanius writes that the whole city had become a μουσεῖον, full of people eager to listen his lectures. Moreover, Synesius of Cyrene (*Eulogy to Baldness* 6), mentions the presence of πίνακες of philosophers and wise men in schools – a very interesting testimony when compared with what Epiphanius reports on the images of philosophers held by the Carpocratians (*infra*). This connotation of the term μουσεῖον as a place of philosophy and, in general, of Greek παιδεία and cult seems to fit well within the polemical depiction of the sanctuary of Epipha-

21 In *Panarion* 21.3.6, Epiphanius, relying on earlier heresiological sources, recalls how statues of Simon in the guise of Zeus and one of his lovers, Helen, in the form of Athena were erected and worshiped by the followers of the heresy. Even for other heresiarchs, however, such as the Gnostic master Mark (*Panarion* 34, that quotes Irenaeus) or the prophet Montanus (*Panarion* 48 *passim*), the heresiologist mentions an individual cult, based on the adoration of the heretic and often on his comparison with some biblical character or God himself, although, in these cases, without the erection of temples or statues.

22 See, for example, the sanctuaries of Core (*Panarion* 51.22.9) and Serapis (*Panarion* 64.1.1) in Alexandria, and more generally, those of the Egyptian idols (*Panarion* 22.2.2).

23 For example, in *Panarion* 64.2.4, Epiphanius refers to the βωμοί of Greek idols where Origen was forced to sacrifice. The pagan connotation of this term derives from the LXX, where the term βωμός is used to refer to pagan altars. For a broader perspective on the term from the LXX to the ancient Christian literature, see Vergari 2020.

nes, who is represented by Epiphanius as the master of a philosophical school – a common accusation, as we shall see, against Platonic Gnostics.²⁴

In the representation of the cult of the Gnostic master, Epiphanius insists on the fact that the inhabitants of the island, deceived by the error of Epiphanes, had participated in the construction of the sanctuary and still actively take part in the cult: “The Cephallenians are so far gone in error that they sacrifice and pour libations (σπένδουσι) to him and have banquets and sing hymns to him (ῥμους τε αὐτῷ ἄδουσι) in his sanctuary which they have established (ἐν τῷ ἰδρυμένῳ αὐτοῦ τεμένει).”²⁵

Therefore, even after his death, Epiphanes continued to be poisonous “like the bite of a reptile”.²⁶ “it was because of the excess of his education, both in the arts and in Platonic philosophy that the whole deceit came to them from him” (*Panarion* 32.3.8) (speaking of the Gnostic heretics (κατὰ τὴν αἵρεσιν) and of the Cephallenians who worship him, and who thus fell into εἰδολομανία). Here, Epiphanius considers the two “victims” of Epiphanes and his Platonic erudition, namely his Gnostic disciples and the inhabitants of the island. The term used twice by the heresiologist to indicate these people is ἐπιχώριοι, which does not possess *per se* a precise religious connotation; instead, it indicates a local reality and, especially for small islands and cities, a civic dimension. However, Epiphanius states that they fell into idolomania, as he suggested when presenting their rituals in the sanctuary.²⁷

The heresiologist, in fact, also uses a vocabulary connected to paganism for the description of the rituals. This is the case of τελεταί, which in the *Panarion* are frequently connected with the μυστήρια, a term that in 4th-century Christian Greek may indicate both the Eucharist and, when accompanied by other terms related to paganism, the mysteries of the heathens.²⁸ The heresiologist says that

24 The accusation of proximity to paganism is also found in other heresies represented in the *Panarion*. However, with regard to the disciples of Carpocrates and Secundus, it is precisely the Platonic derivation of their doctrines that constitutes the main polemic and the central motive of the comparison with the pagans.

25 *Panarion* 32.3.7.

26 The frequent comparisons with reptiles and snakes derive from Epiphanius’ tendency to generally compare every heresy that he analyzes in the *Panarion* with a dangerous animal, especially reptiles. On this subject, see Mirto 2017, 11–13.

27 In *Panarion* 79.23.6, Epiphanius, reporting a letter he sent to the Christians of Arabia, mentions the ἐπιχώριοι of Shechem, who fell into an error similar to that of the Cephallenians, because they attributed divine honors to Jephthah’s daughter, as they confused her with Core (see also *Panarion* 55.1.10): “For in Shechem, that is, the present day Neapolis, the inhabitants offer sacrifices in the name of Core, supposedly because of Jephthah’s daughter [*Judges* 11] who was once offered to God as a sacrifice”.

28 The term τελεταί is connoted as a pagan term already from the beginning of the *Panarion*; see, for example, *Panarion* 4.2.6: “It was then that the Greeks’ mysteries and rites (τὰ παρ’

the heretics “pour libations” (σπένδουσι) in honor of Epiphanes; furthermore, other terms, which are not linked to precise groups and which are also used in a Christian context (like “sacrifice”, θυσία, or “to sing hymns”, ὕμνους ᾄδω), or practices generally associated with other groups – the meetings κατὰ νεομηνίαν, “during the new moon”, depicted in the *Panarion*, but not exclusively, as a Judaizing practice²⁹ – should be read in the pagan perspective suggested by the heresiologist.

Therefore, the heresiologist constructs these two groups, the locals and the Gnostics, and he unites and mixes them in practice within the sanctuary and in the context of the rituals: the Gnostics, thus, become pagans in Epiphanius’ polemical representation, since they frequent the same site and participate in the same rituals as the local idolaters. This strategy of assimilation to idolatry should be put back into the framework of the broader polemic against the Platonic Gnostics.³⁰ Speaking of Carpocrates (not coincidentally, Epiphanes’ father!) and his disciples, Epiphanius wrote that they had some images of Christ which they worshiped together with those of other philosophers:

They have images painted with colors (εἰκόνας ἐνζωγράφους διὰ χρωμάτων) – some, moreover, have images made of gold, silver and other material – which they say are portraits of Jesus, and made by Pontius Pilate! [...] They possess images like these in secret, and of certain philosophers besides – Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and the rest – and they also place other portraits (ἐκτυπώματά) of Jesus with these philosophers. And after setting them up they worship them and celebrate heathen mysteries (τὰ τῶν ἑθνῶν ἐπιτελοῦσι μυστήρια). For once they have erected these images, they go on to follow the customs of the heathen (<τὰ> ἑθνῶν ἔθη).³¹

“Ἐλλῆσι μυστήρια τε καὶ τελεταὶ began”. Moreover, the term τελεταὶ is often associated by Epiphanius with a deity or the devil (that is, for Epiphanius, the same figure!): “For where can I not find proof of their murders and monstrous deeds, and of the devil’s rites (τελετὰς διαβόλου)” (*Panarion* 26.14.5); *Panarion* 26.15.6: “For their loathsome worship is truly snake’s food, and those who celebrate this rite of Zeus – a daemon now but once a sorcerer (τὴν τελετὴν τοῦ νῦν μὲν δαίμονος Διὸς πάλαι δὲ γόητος)”. On the term μυστήρια in the *Panarion*, see Massa 2018.

²⁹ This is the case, for example, of the Manicheans in *Panarion* 66.23.6.

³⁰ On the “radical Platonism” of the Gnostic current of Carpocrates and Epiphanes, see Jurasz 2017.

³¹ *Panarion* 27.6.10. The representation of this cult of images on the part of the Carpocratians was already present in the *Refutatio* (7.32.8), which spoke of certain counterfeit images of Jesus made by these heretics, and, above all, in Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 1.25), from whom Epiphanius takes his inspiration, modifying certain aspects of the representation and insisting on the closeness of the Carpocratians with the pagans. On these images held by the Carpocratians, see Baudoin 2021.

It is interesting to note that Epiphanius’ polemic against the Carpocratians is based, in this case, on three elements. The first one is the possession and adoration of images and paintings, an element that, for Epiphanius (who is against the production, the custody, and the worship of the images)³² is a clear sign of idolatry, even if these images represent Christ. Secondly, the controversy concerns the philosophical nature of the group, since among the images worshiped by the Carpocratians there are also Greek philosophers, from whom the heretics themselves, according to the heresiologist, take their inspiration.³³ Finally, the presence of mysteries (μυστήρια), which in this case are to be linked to the mysteries of the pagans, as Epiphanius himself specifies. The presence of these three elements (images, philosophers, and mysteries) brings the Carpocratians closer to the pagans and assimilates the two groups, in the heresiologist’s polemic.

In the rhetorical strategy of the *Panarion* chapters dedicated to this Gnostic current, the portrayal of the heretics as being close to the pagans is a constant polemical element. The representation of the sanctuary dedicated to Epiphanes, where both the heretics and the local idolaters take part in the rites in honor of the master should be read, in my opinion, within this larger framework.

In conclusion, the sharing of the site and the participation in the same rituals leads Epiphanius to mix the two groups – that is, the Platonic Gnostics of the Epiphanian and Secundian current, attacked in this chapter of the *Panarion*, and the idolaters of Cephalonia – in order to discredit with more vehemence his opponents. Coming back to the categorization discussed in the introduction, it is possible to refer to the sanctuary of Epiphanes in the *Panarion* as a heretical “non-place”, where the presence of idolaters legitimates the representation of a totally-otherness and, on a taxonomic level, the idea of the Platonic Gnostics as pagans.

3. The “threat” posed by sharing: the “Messalian plague” in monasteries

The chapter eighty of the *Panarion*, the last chapter of the anti-heretical treatise, is devoted to the Messalians, a group contemporary of Epiphanius, widely present between Syria and Cappadocia, and of which the heresiologist probably had

³² On this issue, Jerome (*Letters* 51.9), who translates into Latin a letter of Epiphanius of 394, recalls an episode of the life of the heresiologist, the so-called “incident of the curtain”: Epiphanius had removed a curtain with a representation of Christ in a church in Bethel, considering it contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures, and invited the custodians to use it as a sheet.

³³ The presence of images of Christ and other figures recalls the famous lararium of emperor Alexander Severus depicted in the *Historia Augusta* (*Life of Alexander Severus* 29.2), where, next to the portrait of Jesus, there were also those of Orpheus and Abraham.

first-hand knowledge.³⁴ The Messalians took their name from their constant prayer,³⁵ an attitude that would reflect a rigorous asceticism, and an enthusiasm similar to that of other charismatic groups – for example, the Montanists.³⁶

Before discussing these Messalians, however, Epiphanius begins a digression on another group with the same name (the “first Messalians”, or Euphemites), born “in the time of Constantius” (*Panarion* 80.1.3) – the emperor Constantius II (r. 337–361) –, from which the second Messalians would have adopted the customs. These first Messalians differed from the second ones on theological grounds:

But those [*scil.* first Messalians] arose from the pagans (ἐξ Ἑλλήνων ὁρμώντο), and they were neither adherents of Judaism, Christians, nor Samaritans [...] and said that the gods existed although they worshiped none < of them > (θεοὺς μὲν λέγοντες, μηδενὶ δὲ <τούτων> προσκυνούντες), supposedly giving divine honor to one only and calling him the Almighty (ἐνὶ δὲ μόνον δῆθεν τὸ σέβας νέμοντες καὶ καλοῦντες Παντοκράτορα).³⁷

Epiphanius seems very precise in the taxonomical categorization of these early Messalians as Ἕλληνες. In this case, the heresiologist follows the classification of the different groups that he suggested at the beginning of the *Panarion*. There, the heresiologist had proposed five macro-groups of heresies before the arrival of Christ: Barbarism, Scythianism, Hellenism (that is, paganism), and Judaism, with its several groups.³⁸ Moreover, to this clarification about the pagan nature of the Messalians, which leads them to believe in the existence of different divinities, Epiphanius adds the detail of the worship of only one god Παντοκράτωρ.³⁹

Despite the degree of precision that he employs to distinguish between various groups of heretics, the heresiologist appears less precise about two important aspects of the group, their places and rituals. In fact, he speaks of προσευχαί, a

³⁴ For a survey of the history of the Messalian movement, from its origins at the end of the 4th century to the Byzantine era, see, e.g., Stewart 1989, and especially 1991, Riggi 1985, and, more recently, Ferguson 2010, on the question of the baptism for Messalians.

³⁵ See *Panarion* 80.1.2: “They are called Massalians, which means ‘people who pray’” (μασσαλιανοὶ δὲ οὗτοι καλοῦνται, ἐρμηνεύμενοι εὐχόμενοι). According to Williams 2013, 646, the name μασσαλιανοί would correspond to “ܡܫܠܝܢܐ, from Aramaic ܡܫܠܝܢܐ, ‘pray’”, while Pini 2017, 481 proposes another explication: “‘Mesaljana’ in siriaco vale ‘asceta’”.

³⁶ In the polemic against the New Prophets, Epiphanius (*Panarion* 48.9.1–10) also mentions their ascetic practices (fasting, sexual abstinence, and so on), and tries to discredit them as exaggerated. On the anti-Montanist polemic, see Dell’Isola 2020.

³⁷ *Panarion* 32.3.5. Williams’ translation is here adapted.

³⁸ We should underline, too, the mention of the Samaritans, who are also present in the classification of heresies before the coming of Christ in chapter nine of the *Panarion*.

³⁹ This reference to the worship of a single god led to the identification of the group with the Hypsistarians. On this problem, see Belayche 2005a, and 2005b.

word already attested in Jewish literature in Greek for “places of prayer” and which keeps this main meaning also in Christian authors.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the heresiologist mentions some εὐκτήρια, a term mainly used in the 4th century by Christian authors to refer to “houses of prayer”, without any particular connotation.⁴¹ However, the fact that Epiphanius specifies that some of these structures were built “in the shape of churches” could indicate, according to the heresiologist, an attempt by heretics to imitate Christian buildings.⁴²

In terms of rituals, Epiphanius is not very specific either, only mentioning some gatherings “in the evening and at dawn with much lighting of lamps and torches”, with songs and hymns (*Panarion* 80.2.1–2). In comparison to the depiction of Epiphanius and his sanctuary, where the vocabulary clearly belonged to a pagan imagery, in this case the spatial and ritual dimension is very generic and undefined. This indefiniteness probably justifies Epiphanius’ particular attention to the taxonomic discourse about early Messalians – a plausible sign of his difficulty in classifying this group.

Nevertheless, his reflection on the places and the rituals of the early Messalians appears particularly relevant, because it is precisely on the basis of these elements that Epiphanius encompasses the first and second Messalians into the same group: “I grouped their sect together with the ones I mentioned first and intend to speak of now because, in their departure from the truth, they do the same things in the open air (ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ), and spend their time in prayer and hymns.”⁴³ The expression ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ, (lit. “outside”), indicates the idea of an open and public place, frequented by several people:⁴⁴ the places attended by the Messalians, indeed, are not secret, remote, or private spaces. The terms used to identify these places (especially the προσευχαί) reveal, on the contrary, that they are open-air, wide and, above all, public spaces – an idea which, considering

⁴⁰ On these places, see Levinskaya 1990.

⁴¹ Lampe (1961, 566), quoting several examples, states that this term could refer to many kinds of buildings: the “house of prayer” mentioned above, the churches in Jerusalem, martyrs’ chapels, and monastery chapels, among others, but also heretical “places of worship”.

⁴² The accusation of imitating the institutions and buildings of the Orthodox is quite common in anti-heretical literature. Regarding the early Messalians, Epiphanius (*Panarion* 80.2.3–4) also mentions some shrines dedicated to the members of the movement who would have been executed during an alleged persecution by the commander Lupicianus and whom the heresiologist ironically names the “martyrs of the pagans” (δῆθεν διὰ τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν εἰδῶλων μαρτυρήσαντας). For the presence of these martyrs, according to the bishop of Costanza, the Euphemites would have “called themselves Martyrians”.

⁴³ *Panarion* 80.3.2.

⁴⁴ See *LSJ*: “under the sky, in the open air. [...] public, open”. The Italian translations of Pini and Ciarlo are quite similar: Ciarlo 2015, 223: “celebrano i medesimi riti all’aperto”; Pini 2017, 485: “celebrando ugualmente le cerimonie all’aperto”.

what was said at the beginning of this contribution, seems very distant from the depiction of an obscure and isolated heretic “non-place”.

As their predecessors, second Messalians would frequent outdoor and public places, and Epiphanius complains about their presence and their begging activity in every corner of the cities.⁴⁵ Unlike the “mother” heresy, indeed, these Messalians were in his eyes more dangerous for their alleged confession of faith in Christ: “But all this was harmless because of its absurdity and could distract no one’s mind from the truth [...]. Today, however, these people who are now called Massalians (νῦν καλούμενοι Μασσαλιανοί) <have adopted> their customs. But they have no beginning or end, no top or bottom, they are unstable in every way, without principles, and victims of delusion.”⁴⁶

Nevertheless, after recalling the exaggerated asceticism and the presumed immorality of the Messalians, at this moment of his argumentation the heresiologist does not give more information about them, their practices and, above all, their places (except for the mention of the activity of beggars). On the contrary, mentioning “some orthodox brothers” who, because of their excessive simplicity, were fascinated by the exaggerated ascetic enthusiasm, he begins a broader reflection on true asceticism and on the right conduct of the ascetic monk.⁴⁷ Unlike other heresies, in the case of the Messalians Epiphanius remains more imprecise about figures, dogmas, and characteristics of the heresy, concentrating instead his analysis on another subject, the life of the monks.

In the perspective of our analysis, the account on Messalians by Theodoret, at the beginning of the 5th century, may give another representation on this group and could help us better understand Epiphanius’ reasons for arguing against them, as well as his polemical strategy.⁴⁸ The bishop of Cyrrhus presents the Messalians under the name of “Enthusiasts” (ἐνθουσιασται) because of their enthusiasm, that would be caused, according to the heresiologist, not by the Holy Spirit, as the heretics claim, but by the devil. This enthusiasm – which leads them to deny the validity of manual labor, not to obey to ecclesiastical authorities, and to call their dreams “prophecies” – constitutes, for Theodoret, the Messalian “illness” (νόσος), which rapidly spreads thanks to the first preach-

45 See *Panarion* 80.3.4: “But in the summertime they sleep in the public squares, all together in a mixed crowd, men with women and women with men, because, as they say, they own no possession on earth. They show no restraint and hold their hands out to beg, as though they had no means of livelihood and no property.”

46 *Panarion* 80.3.3

47 See *Panarion* 80.4.1: “But they got this harmful doctrine from the extreme simplicity of certain of the brethren. For some who are brothers of mine, and orthodox, do not know the moderation of Christian conduct.” At this time, the rules of monastic behavior were not fixed yet and Epiphanius thus participated in the debate by describing the extreme ascetic conducts as deviant (*infra*).

48 On the sources on early Messalianism, see Gribomont 1972.

ers, who enter and frequent different monasteries.⁴⁹ When the ecclesiastical authorities discover the extent of the plague, it is often too late: the monasteries are infected by the Messalian message, and the bishops must react with decisiveness. This is the case of the bishop of Melitine, Letoius: "Under these circumstances Letoius, who was at the head of the church of Melitine, a man full of divine zeal, saw that many monasteries, or, shall I rather say, brigands' caves (σπήλαια ληστρικά), had drunk deep of this disease. He therefore burnt them (ἐνέπρησε ταῦτα), and drove out the wolves from the flock (τοὺς λύκους ἐκ τῆς ποιμνῆς ἐξήλασεν)."⁵⁰ It is interesting to observe that Theodoret uses here the expression "brigands' caves" (σπήλαια ληστρικά), an expression which is commonly used to define and stigmatize heretics' places and which recall the idea of the heretic's space as a "non-place" described in the introduction to this contribution. When the disease is not totally widespread, the solution on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities is "to drive the wolves away" from the monastery.⁵¹ The historian reports the case of Amphilochius of Lycaonia: "In like manner the illustrious Amphilochius to whom was committed the charge of the metropolis of the Lycaonians and who ruled all the people, no sooner learnt that this pestilence had invaded his diocese than he made it depart from his borders and freed from its infection the flocks he fed (τὰ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ νεμόμενα τῆς λώβης ἐκείνης ἠλευθέρωσε ποιμνία)."⁵² In other words, Amphilochius identifies the individuals responsible for the spread of the Messalian enthusiasm in the monasteries in order to remove them. The same procedure is also followed by the bishop of Antioch Flavianus – the last episode reported by Theodoret. When the bishop learns that "in Edessa they [*scil.* the Messalians] never ceased to cast their venom on anyone who approached them"⁵³ and that the heresy was spreading in some monasteries, he summoned to Antioch a group of monks who would have diffused Messalian ideas among the Orthodox brothers. When the oldest of the group, thanks to the bishop's acumen, confessed the extreme positions of the Messalians, Flavianus could identify and condemn the heretics: "O you that have grown old in evil days, your own mouth convicts you, not me, and you are testi-

49 See Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.11.1.

50 *Ecclesiastical History* 4.11.4. Translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* are taken from the edition by Blomfield 1892.

51 The metaphor of wolves in the midst of the flock is present in the Gospels – see *Matthew* 7.15: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing (ἐν ἐνδύμασιν προβάτων), but inside are ravening wolves (λύκοι ἄρπαγες)". It is widely used by Christian authors in polemics against heretics, especially the false prophets. Epiphanius, for example, uses this metaphor, often quoting the passage of *Matthew*, against the Montanists (*Panarion* 48.3.1) and the Anomoeans (*Panarion* 76.5.2).

52 *Ecclesiastical History* 4.11.5.

53 *Ecclesiastical History* 4.11.5.

fied against by thy own lips.”⁵⁴ The guiltiest are expelled from the region, but the Messalian problem, as Theodoret concludes, is not resolved: “After their unsoundness had been thus exposed they [*scil.* Messalians] were expelled from Syria, and withdrew to Pamphylia, which they filled with their pestilential doctrine (ταύτην τῆς λώβης ἐνέπλησαν).”⁵⁵

Theodoret’s passage presents two interesting aspects: on the one hand, it shows the bishops’ progressive interest in monasteries even before the Council of Chalcedon (451), which resulted into monasteries being put under episcopal authority;⁵⁶ on the other hand, it demonstrates how monasteries could be ideal places for the diffusion of different (and, in the polemical perspective, heretic) ideas and practices.⁵⁷ If enthusiastic movements are generally capable of involving large numbers of people, places of asceticism and community life such as monasteries facilitate this process. In comparison to earlier charismatic movements, such as the Montanism mentioned above, the development of monasticism in the 4th and 5th centuries seems to have played an important role for the diffusion of the movement: enthusiasts who embraced Messalian ideas could find a fertile ground in monasteries to preach their message and to involve other monks. For this reason, the metaphor of the “illness” is particularly effective in representing the Messalians: it is in public and densely frequented places that an illness quickly spreads. The bishops’ interventions precisely focus on monasteries as shared sites, in order to interrupt the sharing by removing the Messalian elements or, more drastically, to destroy the place – what Maureen Attali and Francesco Massa, in the introduction to this volume, call a “modality of non-sharing”.⁵⁸ The bishops try, in other words, to restore the monastery as an “orthodox place”, only frequented by the monks who embrace a type of asceticism that abides to the principles of orthodoxy, otherwise the monastery would turn into a place of heresy. Of course, it is surely too early to speak of “orthodox monks” or “heretical monks” in this period, when monasticism is a still-evolving

⁵⁴ *Ecclesiastical History* 4.11.8. Blomfield’s translation is here adapted.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ See *Council of Chalcedon*, canon 4. On this canon and the regulation of monasteries under the authority of the bishops, see Barone Adesi 1990, 323–352.

⁵⁷ An article by Díaz 2019, published in the volume cited in the introduction of this contribution, addresses the topic of monasteries in Late Antique Spain as “spaces of heresy” (in particular, Priscillianism) and social alternative. Although the topic addressed by the scholar is different from that of this contribution, on a geographical and historical level, some reflections in the introductory part seem to also be relevant to our analysis of the presence of “Messalian ideas” in Syrian monasteries: “En líneas generales, los monasterios parecen presentarse ante el mundo como inmunos a cualquier contaminación doctrinal; sin embargo, al hablar de heterodoxia, debemos entender que la alteración de lo unánimemente aceptado no se remite exclusivamente a la disidencia doctrinal” (Díaz 2019, 125).

⁵⁸ See the chapter by M. Attali and F. Massa in this volume.

and very diverse reality – although there are attempts at regulating and managing monastic and ascetic life, with the invitation to reject any exaggerated form of asceticism.⁵⁹ However, this categorization is useful in the polemical perspective of the sources that speak of these different forms of asceticism.

As mentioned before, Theodoret's representation of Messalians can help us understand Epiphanius' polemical strategy against the group and, at the same time, the reasons of his vagueness about the places attended by the heretics. I have discussed above how the heresiologist, after a brief presentation of the second Messalians, complained about the ingenuousness of some of the orthodox brothers who were fascinated by exaggerated ascetic practices and then praised the true ascetic life. Epiphanius, who had long lived as a monk, used to know and appreciated monastic and ascetic circles in monasteries, and he continued to be in contact with monks and ascetics, as G. Aragione states: "Epifanio [...] segue con attenzione il sorgere di movimenti ascetici e si interroga sull'ortodossia della loro dottrina."⁶⁰ We should also remember that the bishop had written the *Panarion* by invitation of two Coele-syrian archimandrites, Paul and Acacius, who had sent him a letter because they were very concerned about the difficulties presented at their time by the rise of various movements that threatened the cohesion of the faithful and the very sanctity of the faith.⁶¹ At the same time, Epiphanius was also aware of the dangers of an excessive enthusiasm: in the *Panarion* he told how he would have been approached in Egypt by a group of Gnostic ascetics – and by their women.⁶²

The description of the Messalians by the heresiologist, which may seem vaguer than these of other heretic groups, could reveal the difficulty in identifying

59 We should also remember that, in the late 4th century, works such as those of Evagrius Ponticus on the conduct of monastic and ascetic life began to be diffused. On this "monastic" literary production, see Moreschini, Norelli 2020, 277–280 and 285–291.

60 See Aragione 2010, 10–11: "In quanto responsabile del monastero e del territorio su cui sorgeva, <Epifanio> doveva avere un'attenzione particolare nei confronti dei movimenti religiosi e delle persone che vi circolavano. La notizia 66 del *Panarion*, per esempio, è dedicata agli Acuaniti, sottogruppo dei Manichei, presenti presso Eleuteropoli. Nella stessa opera racconta di aver smascherato, sempre nelle vicinanze di questa città, un falso asceta, di nome Pietro, che da giovane aveva professato dottrine gnostiche ed era stato perfino esautorato dal sacerdozio."

61 See *Panarion, Letter of Acasius and Paul* 1.8–13: "And our request is that you give us, for our instruction, some of the words you have spoken to certain brethren. [...] We have heard names assigned to the sects by your Honor, and are asking your Reverence to tell us explicitly the heresy held by each of these cults. For everyone's gift is the same. [...] All the little ones in the cloisters are praying the greater that they may enjoy a spiritual gift from your Reverence."

62 This episode is reported in chapter 26 of the treatise, precisely dedicated to the Gnostics. Epiphanius is said to have been approached by a group of these Gnostic ascetics during his stay in Egypt as a young student. The heresiologist also recalls how he, like the patriarch Joseph in Egypt, would have soon turned away from these heretics, without having been corrupted by their ideas and their women. See *Panarion* 26.17.4–5.

these heretics in the monastic context (since they are “wolves disguised as sheep”),⁶³ but also in condemning their ascetic life: a strong condemnation of ascetic practices would in fact conduct to the risk of a complete rejection of asceticism itself. It is precisely for this reason that Epiphanius focuses in his argumentation on asceticism and on how to live the monastic life, i. e., avoiding exaggerations and obeying to certain principles, such as the validity of baptism, the submission to the bishop, and the importance of manual work – all elements which were refused by the Messalians.⁶⁴ Observing such principles within the monastic life ensures, for Epiphanius, a right ascetic conduct:

The word of God tells us to mark such people, who will not work (τοὺς μὴδὲν ἐργαζομένους). [...] <A>nd [it applies] to all these servants of God who labor righteously with their own hands to suffice also for them that need – just as they perform this righteous labor in every monastery, in Egypt and every country (ἐν ἐκάστῳ μοναστηρίῳ, ἔν τε τῇ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων χώρα καὶ ἐν πάσαις χώραις).⁶⁵

In the cases reported by Theodoret, the bishops are the ones who identify the problem in the monasteries and take action against the Messalians (or even against the monastery when it appears completely contaminated by heretical ideas). The solution suggested by the *auctoritas* Epiphanius, both bishop and monk, involves the monks themselves: they in fact must demonstrate a righteous asceticism and control suspicious figures, to avoid a sharing of space that could lead to the spread of dangerous ideas about the ascetic way of life and to an assimilation between the two groups, the “orthodox” and the Messalians.⁶⁶

As mentioned above, despite the first attempts at regulating asceticism and monastic life, talking about “orthodoxy” and “heresy” in the still-evolving monastic context of this period does not seem to be appropriate. However, in the polemical context of the *Panarion* Epiphanius’ strategy is to encompass all these different practices of exaggerated asceticism back into what he considers as a “heretical” way of living. This “heretical” way takes a concrete form, in the here-siologist’s polemic, in the Messalians, a group whose contours, characteristics,

⁶³ See Ciarlo 2015, 21: “Il movimento messaliano portava all’estremizzazione gli aspetti mistici e ascetici legati al disprezzo del mondo e alla valorizzazione della preghiera, senza che si fosse dotato di un’organizzazione settaria definita e di una dottrina ben delineata.”

⁶⁴ In this chapter dedicated to the Messalians, Epiphanius widely insists on work and on its importance in the life of the monks. The positive view of work is, however, a fairly common trait in the *Panarion*; see Riggi 1977.

⁶⁵ *Panarion* 80.4.3–4. Epiphanius also refers to some brothers who seemed to have been educated by “the Persian immigrant, Mani” (*Panarion* 80.4.3), probably mentioning their repudiation of physical labor. The invitation “to control these people” seems to be a reference to the *Second Letter to the Thessalonians* (3.11) and to *Letter to the Romans* (16.17).

⁶⁶ On the construction of Messalianism in the polemical perspective with regard to this “orthodox monasticism”, see Caner 2002, 87–125.

and aspects remain difficult to identify, as seen in Epiphanius' text. However, the creation of Messalianism has a specific function in the reflection of the heresiologist: it helps him identify the problem of the monasteries, and better identify and recollect the various threats of an exaggerated asceticism through the identification of a specific group. Tracing these exaggerated tendencies back to a single group, the Messalians, thus allows the heresiologist to show the risks of the sharing of spaces and, consequently, as we have seen, to invite the monks themselves to identify the problematic elements in the monasteries and to avoid them, therefore interrupting the dangerous sharing.

4. Conclusions

In this contribution I have analyzed how the rhetorical and polemical strategies in the *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis in the representation of (real or presumed) sharing of religious space between heretics and other groups changes according to the identity of those groups.

In the case of Epiphanes' sanctuary in Cephallonia, the frequentation of the same space by Gnostic heretics and the Cephallenians, who had fallen into idolatry, is a strategic element that allows the author to strengthen his accusations of paganism addressed to Platonic Gnosticism. In several passages of the chapters dedicated to the Platonic group of Gnosticism, Epiphanius insists on the proximity of these heretics with Greek philosophers (first of all Plato, naturally). In the case of Epiphanes, the sharing of a place denounced (through the use of a specific vocabulary) for being pagan, and the participation of idolaters and Gnostics in the same rites reinforce this idea of proximity of the heretics with paganism as regard their practices.

In the case of the Messalians, the sharing of the monastic spaces between Orthodox and heretics is, in the eyes of the heresiologist, more problematic. Epiphanius has some difficulty to exactly describe the characteristics of this group, revealing that by the term Messalianism he meant the different tendencies towards an exaggerated asceticism, against which some bishops (according to Theodoret's later testimony) acted decisively. However, the identification of a specific group to which he can reconnect these ascetic tendencies is functional to Epiphanius' polemical discourse. He considers sharing a risk, which could lead to confusion and assimilation between orthodox and Messalians, and recommends to the monks to observe an "orthodox asceticism" and avoid those who are not complying with its rules, thus prevent sharing. In conclusion, the coexistence of several groups in the same space elicits from Epiphanius some polemical reflection, which shows how the question of heretical spaces is more complex than heresiologists usually present it.

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Shared Religious Sites in Late Antiquity: An Afterword

Nicole Belayche

You cannot, indeed, share the table of the Lord
and the table of demons at the same time.
Paul, *1 Corinthians* 10:21

Maureen Attali and Francesco Massa propose a stimulating investigation on “shared religious sites” in Late Antique Eastern Mediterranean in order to draw up models of occupancy dynamics, especially that of “active sharing” in the fourth section of their contribution (pp. 32–40). As they put it in their *Preface*, the choice of the topic follows a hermeneutic approach which distances itself from the historiographic model of conflictual relationships between worshipers of different religious affiliations (mainly polytheists and Christians, occasionally Jews),¹ without dismissing the competitive ambience which was characteristic of Late Antiquity.² On the basis of this tension, the editors intend to look more closely and finely at actual facts – “*sur le terrain*” – which attest to diverse and complex situations of cohabitation. In recent scholarship, the question is discussed from the point of view of various spatial scales: from a wider perspective focusing on cities or landscapes,³ to the most restrictive one. The latter is adopted in the present volume, dedicated to cult places (“religious sites”), which were the smallest spatial points for communication with, and encounter of, the divine, beside their status as landmarks for cultural traditions and claims for identity.⁴ Yet, the general definition of “religious sites” they promote allows for a reflection on various scales. The seven contributions presented in this collective volume focus on diverse areas of the Eastern Mediterranean (the Cephalonia Island, Asia Minor, Alexandria in Egypt, and Hierapolis in Syria) and cover a wide range of evidence – from legal (“pagan” and Christian) dispositions to polemical

1 See Kofsky 1998.

2 The conference at the origin of this volume was part of a research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation on “Religious competition in Late Antiquity”, directed by F. Massa at the University of Fribourg. For a critical approach of the notion of “religious competition”, see Naerebout 2016.

3 See Caseau 1999. Most recently see Burchardt, Giorda 2021, with already a contribution of Attali, Massa 2021, on the religious site of Daphne (Antioch).

4 See Belayche 2017a.

discourses of heresiologists and edifying legends,⁵ as well as from topographic statements to representations of places.

The remarks proposed in this chapter also stem from the stimulating discussions that took place during the (hybrid) meeting at Fribourg.⁶ I mainly address here questions of definitions, heuristic tools, and methodological approaches as they emerge from the various topics discussed, in order to adhere to the theoretical ambition of the editors. In an original work process aimed at fostering collective reflection, Attali and Massa made explicit what their ambition was two months before the conference. In March, they invited the contributors of the upcoming Fribourg meeting to attend an online lecture given by Robert Hayden, who exposed the theoretical model he had built with a team of scholars (pp. 10–12). Their model is that of “antagonistic tolerance”, which analyzes the dynamics of relationships between different cohabiting religious groups in terms of “dominance and subordination, or contestation over dominance”, with eventual “periods of equilibrium” (Hayden p. 217). In her contribution, Maria Chiara Giorda (p. 121) puts this model at the center of her reflection, while further developing the question of the logics of power at stake: “top-down”, “bottom-up”, and “middle-up”. Hayden presents his model in the last chapter of the volume and offers comparative examples drawn from more recent periods.⁷ Yet, Hayden’s “antagonistic tolerance” is not the unique theoretical framework underlying the various reflections presented in this volume, all the more so as it is mainly built on the study of the cohabitation between exclusively monotheistic communities (Jews, Christians, and Muslims),⁸ which show clearly-delineated “religious identities” for the cases he has studied. Hayden’s model also pleads for a long “Late Antiquity”, going deep into the Islamic centuries (down to the beginning of the second millenary),⁹ whereas the aim of the present volume is to investigate a more restricted timespan in a time of mutations (4th to 7th centuries) – “the intellectual village of Late Antiquity studies” (Hayden p. 216).

5 No contribution is strictly devoted to hagiographic texts in this volume, but two refer to them, K. Heyden’s and M. Lenkaiyté Osterman’s.

6 These were greatly enriched by discussants: Jean-Jacques Aubert, Lorenz Baumer, Philippe Borgeaud, Mattias Brand, the late Marie-Françoise Baslez, and Gregor Emmenegger.

7 For these later periods, Fowden 2002 analyzes the sharing of *temene* in four sites of Umayyad Palestine.

8 Hayden’s model was developed from the 2000s onwards, on the basis of cult places ranging from the Medieval to the Contemporary period in the Balkans and in Turkey – called “Rumelia, the land of the Rum, the Romans” (to restrain the geographical area to what is relevant to this volume) –, thus encompassing diverse monotheistic affiliations (Christians, Jews, Muslims). For a synthesis, see Hayden *et al.* 2016 (with two Late Antique case studies: Ankara, Turkey: 66, and Mértola, Portugal, 115) and R. Hayden’s contribution in this volume.

9 Hayden also pleads here for a “better appreciation of the generality of the patterning of these social processes throughout the longer time span” (p. 239).

Consequently, when “antagonistic tolerance” is referred to in some papers,¹⁰ it is with a certain distance dictated by the specificities of the period under scrutiny, and eventually in conjunction with other theoretical models. Peter Talloen adopts the three-stage model of Christianization proposed by Aude Busine (a chronological approach). Katharina Heyden identifies “processes of religious co-production” in Syrian Hierapolis. Gaetano Spampinato analyzes some heretical places from a “heterotopical perspective [...] characterized by their complete ‘otherness’ and diversity in relation to reality” (pp. 169–170), in the wake of Foucault’s concept of “*hétérotopie*”: in heresiological texts, the heretics’ spaces, real or phantasmatic,¹¹ operate as an image of their deviant positions, as if mirrored “on the ground”.

In the following comments, I shall proceed as the historian that I am, starting from historiography and available evidence in order to think about operating models, and I shall envision further options which could illustrate the dynamics of competitive sharing in Late Antiquity.

1. Contextualizing the question: a largely hidden history

All the contributions build on a statement commonly shared today among scholars focusing on Late Antiquity: the definitive dismissal of the pattern of a conflictual “end of temples” or “of paganism”.¹² In the words of Heyden, “we no longer look so much for clear successions, transitions or transformations from “pagan” to “Christian” cult practices, but rather seek to identify and explain overlapping and intermingling practices and identities of persons and places” (p. 159). Yet, firstly, there were indeed some violent destructions, all the more emphasized as they concerned prestigious temples (in Alexandria and Apamea in Syria for instance)¹³ and such destructions were highly publicized in Christian polemical narratives;¹⁴ secondly, it is difficult to identify the reasons for the destruction of many temples on the sole basis of archaeological data.¹⁵ Coexistence

10 M. Giorda, p. 133; K. Heyden, p. 162; P. Talloen, p. 113 (“A straightforward application of the concept of competitive sharing – in the sense of active sharing – does not seem possible for the religious sites in Late Antique Asia Minor”).

11 See the sanctuary of Epiphanes in Cephalonia, which he studies pp. 172–177 (“places which are (re)created by the heresiologist, beyond their historical and spatial reality, to motivate his polemical perspective”, p. 172).

12 E.g., in this volume M. Giorda for Egypt, pp. 135–136. More generally, see recently dal Covolo, Sfameni Gasparro 2021.

13 Archaeological data in Sagalassos: see P. Talloen in this volume, pp. 98–99.

14 For an overview of the main historiographical trends, see Caseau 2014. For a conjunction of “perspectives of monument, event and discourse”, see Hahn, Emmel, Gotter 2008, 6.

15 Ward-Perkins 2011. A factual panorama is available in Lavan 2011, XIX–XLIX.

was dreaded for the risks of compromises it bore. And indeed, testimonies of mixing do exist: from the anecdote of Judas Maccabaeus' soldiers carrying figurines of the (pagan) gods of Iamnia in order to protect them ... but which finally caused their death according to the pious author of *2 Maccabees* (12:40), to pagan practices (even sacrifices) in Jewish aristocratic families during the imperial period,¹⁶ via Christian authors worrying about their flock who peopled theaters (*ipsi implent et theatra qui ecclesiam*).¹⁷ The risk was all the more actual because the Late Antique pagan intellectuals were speculating about the unity of the divine beside the plurality of its manifestations.¹⁸ Such positions easily earned the label of "heretic"¹⁹ from the authorities that considered themselves as representative of the orthodoxy. Yet, the religious mixing did not necessarily lead to ethno-religious confusion, so fiercely denounced by the "knights" of a doctrine, either bishops or heresiologists. The same religious formula, as for example *Heis theos*, used by different religious groups, could on the contrary become a weapon in a bid to claim a specific identity.²⁰ Archaeological evidence can also reveal situations of mixing without confusion, in Galilee for instance.²¹ Mosaic inscriptions of the so-called Severus synagogue at Hammat Tiberias, likely dating to the last quarter of the 4th century,²² attest to this cultural mixing through three languages (Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic) and the names of eight donors either Latin, Greek or Semitic. Moreover, cross-cultural contacts among these wealthy, hence powerful, men of the circle of the Patriarch²³ are also demonstrated by the parallel use of two ritual expressions with different ethnic backgrounds: the regular Greek formula εὐχόμενος ("after a vow") and traditional, Jewish ones for the closing acclamation: ἀμήν (in the Severus' inscription

16 Stern, S. 2014. This statement does not reach the provocative position of Schwartz 2004 on a "dejudaization" of the Jews.

17 Augustine, *Sermons* 250.3. See also John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction Homilies* (*Catechesis ad illuminandos* 1–8) (SC 50bis) 6.1.

18 See already Celsus, *ap.* Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.21.6–9 (transl. G. Emmenegger 2022 online): "The divine is common to all indeed (Ὁ γε μὴν θεὸς ἅπασι κοινός) [...] What, then, is there to hinder those who are most devoted to his service from taking part in public feasts (τί οὖν κωλύει τοὺς μάλιστα καθωσιωμένους αὐτῷ καὶ τῶν δημοτελῶν ἐορτῶν μεταλαμβάνειν).

19 See, in this volume (G. Spampinato, p. 178), the reference to the Messalians (*ap.* Epiphanius), professing "that the gods existed although they worshiped none <of them>, supposedly giving divine honor to one only and calling him the Almighty (Παντοκράτωρ)".

20 For the idea that in Samaria (*Palaestina*), the acclamatory formula *Heis theos* was engraved by Jews, Samaritans, and Christians alike as a claim of their respective identities, see Di Segni 1994. On the use of the formula in connection with the christianization process, see Trombley 2001, II, 313–315.

21 See Aviam 2004.

22 Cf. Talgam 1988, and Weiss 2009.

23 Severus is θερεπτός τῶν λαμπροτάτων πατριαρχῶν (I underline), Dothan 1983, 60, no. 2.

tion) or ζήση (“May he live”) in others.²⁴ Lexical and visual semantics (in this synagogue, the Helios mosaic)²⁵ are borrowed from both Jewish and pagan traditions; yet, language switching was a convenient tool for expressing one’s identity, as for instance the use of Hebrew names for the zodiac signs in order to allude to the Hebrew calendar. Later, during the reign of Theodosius II, cultic practices at Mamre (in Judaea near Hebron), where Jews, pagans, and Christians held their own rituals in a shared holy place according to Sozomen,²⁶ offer an enduring testimony of multi-religious societies, although at Mamre Constantine had had the pagan buildings destroyed, and a church erected, one century earlier.

Religious coexistence is largely documented and a 423 law (*Theodosian Code* 16.10.24.1) even protects “Jews or pagans (*Iudaeis ac paganis*) that live in peace and do not attempt any seditious act or anything against the laws (*nihilque temptantibus turbulentum legibusque contrarium non audeant*)”. Yet, the sharing of sanctuaries is less easily attested archaeologically, though it may have been a reality given its explicit prohibition in normative Christian texts like the Greek conciliar canons studied by Mantè Lenkaitytė Osterman. It may well be because in the cities as in the countryside, cult places were considered as visual markers and reference points, they were sites expressing the domination of a territory²⁷ or the memory of political changes.²⁸ They were therefore considered as meaningful buildings for the whole community, whatever the religious belonging of each of its members. Looking for evidence of the sharing of sanctuaries might even be the most difficult challenge, for ritual practices usually only leave light and transient traces, especially after the “end of sacrifices”.²⁹ Texts from pagan, Jewish, and Christian authors document some rites which leave

24 Dothan 1983, 55–60.

25 See Talgam 2014, 268–281.

26 Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.4.3; for Argov 2006, Sozomen wanted to stress a Palestinian identity sharing a legacy of holy men. See also Kofsky 1998, and Lichtenberger 2007 (an Idumean identity).

27 See, e.g., in the colony of Berytus created by Agrippa in 15 BCE, the monumentalization of the temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus which started in the first half of the 1st century CE.

28 See, for Italy, Stek 2009.

29 Cf. Stroumsa 2005. In former periods, some sites attest to these multi-religious cohabitations (pagan and Jewish), as for example in Hellenistic Maresha/Beth Guvrin on the South border of Judaea; see Eshel 2010, 79–82, and Jacobson 2005 (for the paintings). In rabbinic literature, evidence of cohabitation is numerous since rabbis had to decide on the right (that is without defilement) attitude to follow, see Palestinian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 1.1, 39b; *ibid.* 1.10; Mishna *Avodah Zarah* 5.5; see Goodman 2000, 42–52, and Halbertal 1998. On the Christian side, there are similar hints of mixing in Canons 2–4 of the so-called “Council” of Elvira (*Illiberis*) at the beginning of the 4th century; yet, the text’s authenticity raises serious doubts, Vilella, Barreda 2013.

very little traces.³⁰ For instance, Marinus writes that Proclus performed rites at the Asclepius sanctuary on the slope of the Acropolis in Athens,³¹ at a time – the first half of the 5th century – when the place was abandoned and turned into a cemetery. For today’s scholars, it would be “miraculous” to find traces of his ritual acts after such a long span of various occupations. Moreover, gestures of “pious” people do not automatically betray their religious affiliation because some were shared, as, for example, raising hands for praying. “It is a common practice of pious travelers, when they pass close a sacred grove or a sacred place by the roadside, to make a vow, offer an apple, and sit down for a moment.”³² Usually, the religious affiliation is deduced from the religious “attribution” of the place, a method that leaves little space for envisioning eventual sharing. Replacement of a cult by another leave more traces insofar as it goes with explicit signs of appropriations. In this volume, Peter Talloen cautiously addresses this point for Anatolia (especially at Ephesos, Aphrodisias and Sagalassos), a region where much archaeological work has been going on recently: “there does not seem to have been much active sharing of religious sites going on between the different religious groups, but rather a sequential replacement of one sacred landscape by another” (p. 105). Yet, one might risk diverse methodological issues for looking at other types of evidence, as for example when attempting to compare series of *spolia* in various places,³³ like Georgios Deligiannakis tried to do in Cyprus.³⁴ Leaving aside the statues which were granted artistic and memorial values,³⁵ a material approach of that kind might help us understand what was kept and why, and how the *spolia* entered within a real (“a conscious referential process”, Talloen, p. 105) or a symbolic narrative of domination. The destruction of the *Marneion* in Gaza shows how its *spolia* were used with a competitive purpose. According to Marc the deacon in his hagiography the bishop Porphyry ordered to lay down the marbles of the *Marneion* “which they [the pagans] said was sacred [...] for a pavement before the temple outside in the street, that it might be trodden under foot [...] And this grieved the idolaters more than the burning of the temple”.³⁶

30 See a first-century pagan author depicting rituals at the most public temple in Rome, the Capitol: Seneca, *De superstitione ap.* Augustine, *The City of God* 6.10; one of the many rabbinic testimonies: Mishna *Sanhedrin* 7.6; the law prohibiting pagan practices in 392: *Theodosian Code* 16.10.12; some of the ritual practices at Mamre: Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.4.5. Archaeology of ritual tries to reconstruct them, see, e.g., Berlin 1999.

31 Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 29 (CUF, 2002).

32 Apuleius, *Florida* 1.1.

33 The editors, p. 31, have more reservations. For Ephesos, see P. Talloen, pp. 100–101.

34 See Deligiannakis 2022.

35 Cf. *Theodosian Code* 16.10.8 (*artis pretio*); see Lepelley 1994, and Kristensen 2012. Still in the 5th century, Majorian, *Novels* 4, in 458 (*haec, quae ad splendorem urbium pertinent*).

36 *The life of Porphyry bishop of Gaza*, 76 transl. G.F. Hill, Oxford, 1913.

Refining the model of cohabitation, sharing or succession (“non-sharing” for the editors, pp. 28–32) is a prerequisite indeed, insofar as, for many places, scholarly interpretations depend on the chosen theoretical model.³⁷ Such a clarification is all the more important as there is an overall dearth of information on pagan sites from the middle of the 3rd century onwards. In this context, the use of the legal notion of *uacantia* (Capucine Nemo-Pekelman, pp. 65–66) can broaden the reflection (for the term might have been illegitimately applied to buildings that were not actually vacant), as does the innovative investigation of Greek canonical sources of the 4th century proposed by Lenkaitytė Osterman, who gives a reverse image – *en creux* – of eventual sharing viewed from their prohibition (pp. 74–77). The lack of information is not only the result of a shift of interest from the social elites, who stopped using religious buildings as tools for self-promotion after the troubles of the 3rd century (hence the abandonment or disappearing of pagan sanctuaries).³⁸ It also stems from a long-lasting trend in Classical archaeology, nowadays abandoned, that primarily focused on what was considered as the “glorious” periods, namely Classical Greece (and secondarily Rome during the High Empire). Thus, when Jacob of Sarug mentions the temple of Hierapolis in the 6th century – such an important temple at such a late time –, is it an actual fact, as hypothesized by Heyden³⁹ – which should come as an amazing exception, especially in the Near East where the Christianization was precocious –, or is it a cultural and memorial mention related to contemporary times for narrative purposes? Archaeology is not helpful at Hierapolis. We are there dealing with a later period and there is no hint of a “publicized” presence of “pagans” on which to anchor the question of an actual competitive sharing.⁴⁰ Focusing on the *chôrai* might be promising, since hagiographic texts (with the critical distance they require, see *infra*) frequently assert that pagan practices took refuge in private houses and in *villae*.⁴¹ Admittedly, in these places, the

37 See, for Rome, the interpretations of the “end” of the *mithraea*, contradicted by archaeological data, in Mahieu forthcoming. For a recent overview, see Sfameni 2021.

38 See Pont 2010, 58–60. For Valentinian I’s *quinquennialia* in 368, the inauguration of a bridge *ex utilitate Urbis aeternae*, *CIL* VI, 31402 (l. 7); see also *Theodosian Code* 6.4.29 (December 29, 396) and *Justinian Code* 11.42.1 (Diocletian and Maximian). The phenomenon existed in Classical periods already, see Palamidis 2018.

39 K. Heyden, p. 149: he “might even indicate that the cult was even still intact at that time”; yet p. 159: “All of this does not mean, though, that cultic activity in the sanctuary of Hierapolis was intact throughout this period.” She addresses the two options pp. 159–162.

40 On the contrary, for the Christians, see K. Heyden, p. 150: “the bishops of Hierapolis were very much involved in the 5th-century Christological controversies”.

41 It might not only be a *topos* for the *pagani* as the inhabitants of the *pagi*. See, e.g., *Life of Porphyry bishop of Gaza* 71. R. Hayden in this volume, p. 234, considers that “one set of places to look for potential competitive sharing of religious sites would be small shrines dedicated to lesser-known or local gods and/or saints”; see Caseau 2004.

pressure of authorities was less present, and Nemo-Pekelman notes that the context of the cities and that of their territories might be different on the juridical level (*si qua in agris templa sunt*, p. 65).

2. The impact of an extensive and heuristic definition of “religious sites”

In the first chapter, Attali and Massa argue for a heuristic definition of “religious sites”, which was proposed to the contributors. Their definition not only encompasses proper cult places but also all shared spaces “of social gathering in the city, public and private”, attended by inhabitants with various affiliations: “places hosting rituals or places where one or more religious identities are displayed and/or claimed” (p. 22). Such an extensive definition opens the scope of the topic to the whole city space, to the “*emprise religieuse*” on the space (see Talloen, pp. 106–113).⁴² It is also consistent with the polytheistic tradition, which had a fluid notion of “sacred place”, even in the Roman law,⁴³ and for which cohabitation of deities in the same *temenos* was a common situation. Identifying a “cult place” was not a matter of built-up space, as attested by Libanius in his discourse *For the temples* (*Or.* 30). The Messalians examined by Gaetano Spampinato gather ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ. This does not necessarily mean “public places” only (pp. 179–180), especially in view of their Syrian connections. The formula may designate open-air sanctuaries as well, without any building except an altar, in the tradition of Syro-Phoenician sanctuaries, but with ritual rules for entering them, like what we know happened on the slope of Mount Hermon in Syria or on Mount Cynthios in Delos.⁴⁴

These “shared religious spaces” are consistent with both the intermingling between religion and the city in Graeco-Roman Antiquity and the fact that building monuments as an *euergetes* was one aspect of the competitive ambience of the civic societies.⁴⁵ In Sardis for instance, the synagogue was a highlight of the urban landscape in the 4th and 5th centuries,⁴⁶ in the same way as the Jews

⁴² Dierkens, Morelli 2008, offers an investigation on the *longue durée*.

⁴³ Gaius, *Institutes* 2.7: *Quod in prouinciis non ex auctoritate populi Romani consecratum est proprie sacrum non est, tamen pro sacro habetur*, I underline (“In the provinces, what was not consecrated by the authority of the Roman people is not properly sacred, yet it is considered as sacred”); see Dubourdieu, Scheid 2000. In this volume, C. Nemo-Pekelman calls this disposition “a legal fiction”, p. 55.

⁴⁴ Respectively: *I GLS* XI, 40 and *I.Délos* 2350.

⁴⁵ See, on the Upper Agora at Sagalassos or on the South agora of Aphrodisias, P. Talloen in this volume pp. 98–99 and 100–101.

⁴⁶ *IJudOr*, II, 2004, 224–232, for an overview of the building; <http://sardisexpedition.org/en/essays/about-synagogue> (with bibliography) for the chronology on the basis of “mosaic floors,

were integrated into the civic society at the highest level, some of them being members of the *boule*⁴⁷ (another Jew is *comes*).⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the active “religious sharing” of the cult place was probably limited to the access to the fountain (συναγωγῆ[ς κρήνη –]), opened publicly;⁴⁹ yet one cannot exclude that the synagogue could have been attended by *proselytoi*, God-fearers or pagan benefactors as it is attested in other Anatolian cities (e.g. Acmonia in Phrygia). The surroundings of the synagogue provide additional evidence: the archaeologists who excavated the “Byzantine shops” have demonstrated that Jewish and Christian shops were close to each other,⁵⁰ before the gradual disappearance of the Jewish ones, probably due to the increasingly uncomfortable situation of the Jews within the Byzantine Empire. Further East, one can mention the Old City of Jerusalem, where Gideon Avni, in a recent talk,⁵¹ has demonstrated that the delimitation of the four quarters (at least on the map) according to ethno-religious lines, as we know them today, is the result of decisions of the Islamic power around the 10th century. It therefore took place at a much later period, and for fiscal and urbanistic reasons, not religious ones.

In cityscapes, religious identity was visible thanks to buildings that attracted crowds of people for regular ceremonies (like in Sardis), or, more elusively, through the reuse of pagan works of art that were marked with Christian signs such as the cross (as Talloen notes regarding Asia Minor). It is puzzling that Constantine, who won the “canonical” image of the first emperor rejecting traditional sacrificial practices,⁵² precisely chose sacrificial reliefs for adorning his Arch at the Meta Sudans.⁵³ Such matters are never straightforward. The mixing of religious references, from some simply belonging to different religions to other clearly antagonistic affiliations, is not necessarily to be linked to the problematic of “sharing”. In this volume, two places illustrate this problematic, as they offer examples of mixing of the same religious affiliations, “pagan” and “Christian” (either orthodox or “gnostic”), in both cases: Hierapolis, first, according to the fine and duly-cautious interpretation of Katharina Heyden and the island of

furnishings, and marble wall decorations”; *I.Sardis* II, n° 486–566; see Rautman 2011 and in this volume Attali, Massa, pp. 37–38.

47 *IJudOr*, II, 2004, 6. Lydien no. 62, 72, 77, 78, 85, 86, 87, 92, 98. One is *tabularius* (no. 76), i.e. a civic officer. See Ameling 2022.

48 *IJudOr*, II, 2004, 6. Lydien no. 64.

49 *I.Sardis* VII, 1, 17, l. 7.

50 Crawford 1990, 17–18 (“The Byzantine shops supplement the evidence from the synagogue with epigraphic, symbolic and religious material”, 17).

51 G. Avni, “Jerusalem between Late Antiquity and Early Islam. The Creation of a Multicultural City” (online AIAS talk, January 6th, 2021).

52 The actual chronology is much more complex and runs on the whole 4th century, see Belayche 2005.

53 See Elsner 2000.

Cephalonia, examined by Gaetano Spampinato, who collects convincing indications from the spatio-ritual lexicon of the heresiologist.

The wide definition chosen by the editors of the volume is helpful from a heuristic perspective because traces of cohabitation (including their limits where identity claims were at stake) are better documented (in written and visual evidence) than proper “active sharing” of cult places. The paradigmatic situation in Mamre, reexamined by Heyden in 2020, does not have many parallels so clearly attested.⁵⁴ Some places happen to be more favorable to the phenomenon of “sharing” than others, first among them monasteries as Giorda and Spampinato underline. As a “subcategory of religious places” (Giorda, p. 120), Alexandrian monasteries were in the front line during the Chalcedonian affair supported by “the Imperial Church”, when non-Chalcedonians yielded the urban religious space. Besides being spaces on which bishops tried to enforce their authority, monasteries were places of everyday life made of “*mixité*”, “spiritual encounters, exchange experience, and mutual learning” of various Christians and non-Christians (Giorda, pp. 122 and 132; and Spampinato, p. 181). Yet, when it came to the relationships with the “pagans”, there was a cooperation between the rival Christian parties against the pagan “demons”, as we see in Egypt at the temple of Isis at Menouthis evoked in the *Vita Severi*. Giorda (p. 136) rightly interprets the episode as “an action of self-legitimization of the orthodoxy and heterodoxy against paganism”. Yet, since the marker of “heterodoxy” points to an ideological definition of religious groups, it is *per se* a changing appellation, varying upon the contexts of times and spaces.

The prevalent model emerging from the various contributions presented in this volume is the model of a “diachronic or sequential sharing”, therefore irrelevant for “actual active sharing” as the editors put it, and as stated by Talloen as well (p. 97: “competitive sharing ... by different groups needs of course to be contemporaneous”). Admittedly, diachronic and synchronic sharing are two different phenomena, yet they are not completely inconsistent, as stated by Giorda: “In our vision, sharing can be diachronic [...]. In both cases, strategies and dynamics of sharing are present” (p. 121). In the case of diachronic sharing, people devoted to different religious affiliations might have occupied the same space successively but with the same purposes, like at curative sources or baths.⁵⁵ Alternatively, people may not have shared the same spaces in the city, but may have had the same ritual practices, in funerary rituals (*ista consuetudo ballanti*

54 See the editors’ inventory, Attali, Massa, pp. 43–45. In Spain, concerning the Elche (Ilici) “Basilica”, contrary to former hypotheses on a “sharing”, see Bar-Magen Numhauser 2021, vol. 2, 750–821: the synagogue (built in the late 4th century, a *domus-synagoga*) was converted to a church in the late 7th century (a “policy of pressure or conversion of Jews to Christianity”, 802).

55 See *infra* n. 67–74.

considered as “pagan” by Caesarius of Arles),⁵⁶ and in specific practices like “the *phallobatoi* of Hierapolis and the Christian stylites of the 5th and 6th centuries” (Heyden, pp. 152–253), or other practices denounced as being shared by the “pagans” and some so-called Gnostics.

If the “religiospace” – “the space in which practitioners of a given religious community interact”⁵⁷ – is that large, it opens the path to other types of evidence that might enhance the inventory initiated by the editors (pp. 44–45). The “other arenas of competition” (to call them like Talloen does, pp. 106–113), namely open spaces (like squares for instance) and all city spaces which housed calendar events, are regularly described as places of meetings, and thus of potential interactions. In the *Misopogon*, the emperor Julian mentions that the festivals were spaces and moments of sharing for all the inhabitants: “these festivals (τὰς πανηγύρεις) which are for all the people in common (ὁπόσοι κοιναὶ μὲν εἰσι παντὶ τῷ δήμῳ), those in which not only men who have knowledge of the gods can take part (ὧν ἕξεστι μετέχειν οὐ τοῖς ἐπισταμένοις θεοῦς), but also the people that fills the city (ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧν ἔστιν ἡ πόλις πλήρης)”⁵⁸.

Thus, chariot races and scenic games were organized for Theodosius I’s wedding,⁵⁹ and in 434 to 435, a prefect of Constantinople wanted to hold Olympic games at Chalcedon, provoking the anger of the local holy man.⁶⁰ Public banquets were also occasions for the gathering of all the population (ἐν τόπῳ ἀφωρισμένῳ τοῖς ἔθνικοῖς, Council of Ancyra, canon 7). They were therefore strictly examined during the conciliar discussions (Lenkaiytè Ostermann, pp. 74–76) – to say nothing about the issue of the origin of the meat (as mentioned by Libanius in his discourse *On the temples*). The convivial meetings frequently took place in the civic temples for practical reasons, because they were large enough for accommodating a large number of people. These *festae conuiuia* were permitted by the law when they housed the ceremonies of the *uota publica* (*Theodosian Code* 16.10.17 in 399 to the proconsul of Africa [= *Justinian Code* 1.11.4]), but denounced by the Christian, doctrinal authorities.⁶¹ “Is not a brother made to stumble if he sees you sitting at meat in an idol’s temple (*si te uiderit*

56 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons* (SC 175) 13.4. They were forbidden by the Synod of Carthage in 419 (canon 60).

57 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 28. R. Hayden in this volume p. 219 defines it as “the distribution in spaces through time of the physical manifestations of specific religious communities and of the populations that built them”.

58 Julian, *Misopogon* [*Oratio* 7] 15.346c, transl. W.C. Wright 1913, modified; compare with 15 [346b]: ἡ πάγκοιτος ἑορτή is distinguished from the *neomenia* of the Syrians (ἡ Σύρων νεομηνία), proper to an ethnico-cultural group.

59 *Chronicon Paschale* 421 (Niebuhr p. 578).

60 Callinicus, *Life of Hypatios* 33.1–5.

61 For a Jewish prohibition, see Tosefta *Avodah Zarah* 4.6 and Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 8a.

in idolio recumbentem)?”⁶² These times of civic-religious festivals were attacked by the Christian bishops in Antioch, Alexandria, and Carthage, precisely because they were places of possible intermingling;⁶³ and they disappeared in the 5th century like the *Lupercalia* in Constantinople (end ca. 495), although they were re-semanticized as a seasonal festival.⁶⁴

All kinds of places for games were other *loci* for encountering people of various affiliations, although supporters of opposite teams had attributed seats (archaeologically documented), like the Jews who supported the blue color, that of the emperor.⁶⁵ Games were attended by the whole population and this again explains that they were regularly attacked in normative discourses, either Jewish or Christian.⁶⁶ Baths are also encompassed into the definition of “religious sites”, insofar as there were places where religious gestures could be performed; thus, the normative, rabbinic literature has many debates about them and the protective devices for Jews entering them.⁶⁷ Yet, rabbinic texts record that the most prominent rabbinic figures went to “pagan” baths, in Tiberias and in Gadara, as the editors note in their inventory.⁶⁸ On the East of the Tiberias lake, the hot baths of Gadara are extensively documented by archaeology and epigraphy.⁶⁹ They might have been a place of “competitive sharing”, since a synagogue was on the hill beside the monumental baths, where devotees wrote in Aramaic,⁷⁰ contrary to the use of Greek (and Arabic later on) in the inscriptions at the baths.⁷¹ Evidence from the baths shows a synchronic (or successive?) sharing

62 Jerome, *Letters* 22.29, after Paul, 1 Cor. 8:10.

63 For Antioch, Soler 2006, 25–27. For Carthage, the new “sermons Dolbeau”, cf. Scheid 1998. See Rebillard 2017.

64 Cf. Graf 2015, 163–183.

65 See Van der Horst 2006.

66 Respectively: Lugaresi 2008, and Weiss 2014, 200–226.

67 In Tosefta *Berakhot* 6.22, a Jew entering a bathhouse should pray: “May it be Your will, YHWH, my God, that you will bring me in peace, and you will take me out in peace. And may there not happen to me a disaster. And if a disaster should happen to me, may my death be an expiation for me.” See also the rabbinic discussions on the statues in the Aphrodite’s bath in Akko, Eliav 2000. More generally see Jacobs 1998.

68 Attali, Massa, p. 33. For the Tiberias baths, see Palestinian Talmud, *Erubin* 6.23c (a meeting of Rabbi Johanan and the “Sages of Daroma” in the baths) and Palestinian Talmud, *Terumot* 2.1, 41b. For the Gadara baths, see Palestinian Talmud, *Qiddushin* 3.14 (Rabbi Jonathan, Rabbi Jehuda ha Nasi, and Rabbi Hama bar Hanina “went up to the hot springs of Gadara”). Cf. Schwartz 2004, 175.

69 Hirschfeld 1997, and *CIIP* V (2022), 2598–2600 (B. Isaac).

70 See *NEAEHL* II (1993), art. “Tell el-Hammeh” (M. Avi-Yonah), 567–568 and *CIIP* V (2022), nos. 7371–7374 in Aramaic; only one inscription in Greek, no. 7375.

71 The standard epigraphic, Greek formula (ἐν τῷ ἀγίῳ/ἱερῷ τόπῳ [or in the plural] μνησθῆναι ὁ δεῖναι) is too light a clue for religious identification insofar as it was common to

between pagans and (then?) Christians (up to and Islamic presence) from the 4th to the 8th century. In his *Panarion*, Epiphanius is even tempted to overstate the sharing between pagans and Christians in order to stigmatize it more strongly. His account of the story of the count Joseph of Tiberias⁷² records the episode of a Christian lady bathing with a young man understood as a pagan (or an Ebionite according to the main issue of his chapter?): she is protected from his harassment by the sign of the cross.⁷³ The episode then makes use of the motif of the miraculous sign, well-known in Christian invectives against the emperor Julian, the so-called “Apostate”.⁷⁴

The ongoing tradition of healing sites like Gadara or Menouthis in the Egyptian Delta (see Attali, Massa, pp. 33 and 36–37), occupied from the “pagan” to Byzantine times,⁷⁵ is exemplified in many Christian books of miracles;⁷⁶ the monk Theodoret went as far as to assert that Asclepius was still secretly honored in these now-Christianized places.⁷⁷ This sharing of similar practices, either at contemporary or successive periods, could be encompassed into our understanding of the sharing of places, if one accepts the idea that competition across time may also be a matter of appropriation and re-semanticization.⁷⁸ Given the

members of any denomination (late “pagans”, Jews, Samaritans, Christians), see Belayche 2017b.

⁷² Cf. Thornton 1990.

⁷³ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.7.5–7 (transl. Williams): “the bathing there is mixed! (ἀνδρόγυνα γὰρ ἐκεῖσε λούονται). There happened to be a free woman of unusual beauty in the bath. Lured by the habit of his licentiousness (τῷ ἔθει τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκολασίας), the young man rubbed his side against the woman’s as he strolled about in the hot-air room. But being Christian, she naturally made the sign of the cross (ἡ δὲ ἐαυτὴν ἐσφραγίσαστο εἰς ὄνομα Χριστοῦ οἷα δὴ Χριστιανῆ οὖσα); *There was no need for her to behave improperly and bathe in mixed company*” (emphasis mine). Mixed baths were prohibited by the Council of Laodicea, canon 30, yet they had already been questioned by pagan authors. For “heretics” performing rites in public baths, see G. Spampinato in this volume p. 171.

⁷⁴ See Moreau 2012–2013.

⁷⁵ See Iamblichus at Gadara, Eunapius, *Life of the Philosophers and the Sophists* 459 (LCL, 368–370). At Seleucia in Cilicia (Meryemlik), Dagron 1978, 80: “Le paganisme, ses dieux, ses adeptes, reviennent comme un thème constant dans les Miracles, prouvant que la victoire officielle du christianisme n’a pas entraîné la suppression immédiate de toute dévotion et de toute culte anciens.”

⁷⁶ Cf. Fernandez Marcos 1975, and Festugière 1971. See also Nesbitt, Crisafulli 1996. On the writing of these collections, Déroche 1993.

⁷⁷ Cf. Edelstein 1998, no. 5, 11–12.

⁷⁸ Augustine, *The City of God* 22.8. For the Byzantine realm, see Déroche 2012, esp. Mir. 1 p. 207 (“il continue jusque aujourd’hui à proclamer ce miracle”) and Mir. 4 p. 211. See in this volume K. Heyden, pp. 160–161. The famous limestone mold from *Palaestina* used for Christian pilgrims’ souvenirs (Heyden, pp. 146–147), which bears the three Biblical angels on one side and a veiled deity called *Ourania* (like the Syrian goddess) on the obverse might not “tes-

impact of these places in collective memories, these sites were not only changed in terms of religious reference; they became places of pilgrimage, a change that modified their layout, as at the Thecla's sanctuary in Seleucia.⁷⁹ At this stage, it is worth recalling the “dominance” dimension of Hayden's model. At the Fribourg conference, Georgios Deligiannakis, studying the Cypriot context, made an important point on the attitudes of the population and the intellectual elite, as opposed to the normative authorities, namely the bishops (what he called “the fundamentalist attitude of the bishop Epiphanius”).⁸⁰ The role of ecclesiastical authorities was prevalent in the case of the Messalians as well (Spampinato, pp. 179–185): depicted with the lexicon of a dangerous infection – a traditional way of referring to deviant groups of any kind in the Roman tradition –, the metaphor was a mean to keep the public and ideological image of clearly-demarked (“pure” or “sane”) communities. The statement is not different at Mamre, where Hayden notes that “a pragmatic handling of local power was beneficial for multi-religious places, whereas symbolic actions of authorities from afar tended to threaten coexistence”.⁸¹

3. Partition, cohabitation, sharing ?

In spite of the multiplication of critical readings taking into account the chronological gaps in the evidence for the fate of pagan cult places, the “desecration model” is still influent among archaeologists, encouraged by crosses engraved on “pagan” busts or pagan temples,⁸² and triumphant Christian inscriptions⁸³ of the 5th and 6th centuries conveying the same message,⁸⁴ to say nothing about hagio-

tify to the survival of pagan cults in Late Antique Levant” (p. 147); at least it attests to a lively visual memory of long-standing iconographic motifs, appropriated by the Christians.

79 Kristensen 2020.

80 Deligiannakis 2022. See the reference paper, Fowden 1978.

81 Hayden 2020, § 74.

82 Respectively: e. g., in Ephesos, Jhort 1993; for buildings, see *Theodosian Code* 16.10.25 in 435 (*Christianae religionis signi*).

83 For epigraphy as a language of competition, see Stern, K.B. 2014.

84 E. g., the famous Demeas inscription in Ephesos (*I.Ephesos* 1351), dated by Kristensen 2013, 9–20, to the second half of the 5th century: “Demeas, having destroyed a deceitful image of demonic Artemis, set up this sign of truth, honouring both God the driver-away of idols, and the cross, that victory-bringing, immortal symbol of Christ.” See also *IGLS* 15/1, no. 177 (= *OGIS* no. 610), in 515, above the entrance to the St. Georges church at Zorava (Trachonitis): Θεοῦ γέγονεν οἶκος τὸ τῶν δαιμόνων καταγώγιον, / φῶς σωτήριον ἔλαμψεν ὅπου σκότος ἐκάλυπτεν, / ὅπου θυσίαι εἰδώλων νῦν χοροὶ ἀγγέλων (“The abode of demons has become the house of God. The light of salvation shines where darkness caused concealment. Where sacrifices to idols occurred, now there are choirs of angels.” Transl. Paweł Nowakowski, *Cult of Saints*, E01754, available at: <http://csa.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01754>).

graphic discourses.⁸⁵ The conflictual narrative had been promoted by the Christian tradition from Paul onwards. In his first *Letter to the Corinthians* (see epigraph), Paul had drawn a sharp distinction between the temple of God and that of the devil (*i. e.*, the “many gods”); this was the first “Christian” attempt to promote a binary classification, a “differential equation” as Jonathan Smith defines the process: “us” vs “them/others”. The “ideology of destruction” (David Frankfurter) or what I called a “profession of faith” in Christian discourses which used cult places as arguments,⁸⁶ was not frequently turned into acts, as Talloen argues in his contribution on Anatolia (p. 104), confirming his previous research.⁸⁷

To shed light on what happened in actual cult spaces, the legal framing is important. Nemo-Pekelman studies the “legal mechanisms of confiscation and reallocation of temples, churches and synagogues to Catholic churches” (pp. 61–68). She notices that the legislation followed comparable logics for all the non-orthodox denominations, albeit with different legal bases depending on the legal status of the various religious sites (either public or not), different procedures (some departing from regular legislation), and various timeframes. Thus, she pertinently invites us to avoid discriminations based on the various “religions”, however complex the situation of each of them may have been. Yet, even if both the triumphant Christian discourse and some legal texts encompassed pagans, Jews, and heretics under the label *superstiones*,⁸⁸ the fate of the temples may have been legally protected by the *ius templorum*, and the churches held by the so-called heretics were not destroyed but given back to the Christian sub-group supported by the power at the time. In that respect, the distinction between the various Christian “Churches” opposed to the one claiming to represent the orthodoxy was significant.

Increasingly numerous recent stratigraphic reports of excavations are overall in agreement. They show the existence of a time gap between the end of a sanctuary (of any kind) and its passing to another religious denomination on the same spot – whatever its configuration was.⁸⁹ The Christian legislation con-

⁸⁵ See in Gaza the “religious *agon*” on the occasion of the horse race during the Maiuma festival according to Jerome, *Life of Hilarion* 11.4–11; see Belayche 2004a, 10–12.

⁸⁶ Respectively: Frankfurter 2008; Belayche 2018.

⁸⁷ Talloen, Vercauteren 2011, 354: “such instances of destruction appear to have been the exception rather than the rule in Asia Minor, as in other regions of the empire. Therefore, when we imagine the destruction of a temple, we should think more in terms of demolition or dismantlement”; and I would add: more than in terms of conversions.

⁸⁸ *Id.* in the heresiologist discourse, see Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion Proem.* 1.3.2, who classifies the sects under “Barbarism, Scythianism, Hellenism [= paganism], Judaism, Samaritanism”.

⁸⁹ See, in this volume, P. Talloen p. 104. On the overall question of temples, see the standard studies of Deichmann 1939, Hanson 1978, and Trombley 1993 for the Eastern Mediterranean. For Greece, see Foschia 2000 and 2009. For Egypt, see Dijkstra 2011.

demned the temples as *superstitionis materia* (*Theodosian Code* 16.10.16, in 399), and the statement also includes synagogues. In Ambrose's *Letter* 74 to Theodosius, which deals with the Callinicum affair (mentioned by Nemo-Pekelman, p. 54), the bishop of Milan sets the opposition between Judaism and Christianity in their respective cult places, since they both endorse a symbolic role in the urban landscape.⁹⁰ In that respect Pierre Bourdieu's "*capital symbolique*" is a useful concept for tackling the spatial dimension of representations of competitive relationships. As Talloen puts it in his contribution on Anatolia, the competition went through "the memories embodied there, rather than with actual competitors" (p. 105), and Jacob of Sarug might provide a good example of this line of interpretation as well, considering the unstraightforward evidence. The Callinicum affair as presented in Ambrose's discourse leads us to understand what "sharing" means (it is not deprived of rivalry), and how it relates to the notion of competition.⁹¹ "Space" is a multi-faceted target, ranging from a tangible to a symbolic or "fictionalized" one (as the editors write, pp. 23–24). Spatial cohabitations can engender violent relationships (as in Alexandria); they can generate similar ceremonies but a renewed semantization (as in Hierapolis of Syria), or an ideologically reconstructed memory of the former religious context because of the time elapsed between the disappearance of the former context and the new framework.

Even without a "destruction model" in mind, there were struggles for the possession or control of cult places, because their visibility impacted the religious, social, and political realms. When the Nicaean orthodoxy won, the reactions against so-called "heretic" cult places and the struggle for the possession of church buildings were even the most violent ones. The hundred-years Arian dossier in Africa, or the controversies in Egypt between Nicaeans and Monophysites, provide such evidence of the struggles for the domination of spaces. Examining the *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis, Spampinato notices "places as shared by both the heretics and other groups, whether 'adversaries' (Jews or pagans) or even Orthodox Christians" (pp. 171–172). Even in his *History*, which is far from heresiological issues, Ammianus Marcellinus lengthily recounts the conflicts that took place between Damasus and Ursinus for the episcopal see in Rome, in 367, and therefore for its church buildings as well.⁹² In such competitions, the role of the imperial authority frequently mixes with local balance of powers (as in the case of the "election" of Damasus): this is demonstrated by comparing the events and the anti-"heretics" legislation collected in the *Theodosian Code*.⁹³ Along these internal conflicts, the social and political visibili-

90 See Chin 2016.

91 See Engels, Van Nuffelen 2014, esp. their introduction, 9–14.

92 Ammianus Marcellinus 27.3.12.

93 For the Greek Councils, see M. Lenkaitytė Osterman, pp. 82–90.

ty provided by a building in the city matched doctrinal competitions and supported them. Similar competitions in spatial visibility existed between Jews and Christians alike.⁹⁴ In Capernaum north of the Tiberias Lake, the changes attested in both the accesses to the synagogue and the orientation of its entrance points to various scenarios, given the octagonal church (the so-called House of Peter) opposed to it: it might point towards a competition of visibility between the two communities and a will to create a clear demarcation between them, or, on the contrary, to a close relationship.⁹⁵ Yet, the second scenario is far from clear because the question of Judeo-Christianity and of the relevance of the category is still under scholarly debates for the Late Antique period and afterwards.⁹⁶

4. Other kinds of evidence for a “tentative inventory”?

On the basis of the valuable inventory of “shared places” initiated by the editors (pp. 43–45) and of their extensive definition of “religious sites”, one might imagine that other places may be worthy of investigation – besides those already mentioned (civic festivals, games, baths) – and listed in the inventory. *Necropoleis* first come to mind. As neutral places, although under the legal authority of the pontiffs in Roman communities, they were places shared between pagans and Christians, sometimes with Jews as well.⁹⁷ Yet, they will become “religiously”

⁹⁴ For Antioch in John Chrysostomos’ homelies, see Attali, Massa 2021, 86–92.

⁹⁵ Arubas, Talgam 2014, propose one eventual, competitive scenario (263): “It was probably an especially unbearable situation when Jews who gathered in the synagogue to deliver their prayers towards Jerusalem faced with the sight of the lofty octagonal church. In such a situation, the resources at the disposal of the Jews of Capernaum would surely have been directed toward changing the building’s plan so that it would turn its back on the church.” Yet the authors envision other scenarios. For later periods, they recall “the co-existence of Christians and Muslims within the same *temenos* in the Umayyad period” (268) on other sites, see *supra* n. 7. See also Attali, Massa, pp. 39–40.

⁹⁶ Cf. Jackson-McCabe 2020, esp. 144–183 (“Beyond Jewish Christianity: Ancient Social Taxonomies and the Christianity-Judaism Divide”).

⁹⁷ On the proximity of Christian and pagan burials in the same *necropoleis*, see Johnson 1997; Rebillard 2010; for Jews in Spain, see Bar-Magen Numhauser 2022, 388 (“*la coincidencia de espacios funerarios judíos con prácticas habituales de enterramiento Tardoantiguos*”, as in Rome’s catacombs) with convincing methodological reflections (“*una crítica a la búsqueda ‘tipológica’ de agrupaciones identitarias en los entornos dinámicos y sincréticos de la Antigüedad Tardía*”, 382). In Asia Minor with a Jewish family, see C. Laforest’s lecture (October 18th, 2021), “Burial rights and practices inside the Roman monumental tombs in Asia Minor: a case study from Hierapolis of Phrygia”, calling for archaeoethanatomical analysis, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfKCFchjyew>. On a similar situation in the Jerusalem area, Avni 1993.

marked and divided places with both the practice of *inhumatio ad sanctos*⁹⁸ and the progressive and late canonical setting of Christian funerary rules.⁹⁹ Here, we encounter, once again, the impact of dogmatic authorities on the issue of “sharing religious sites”.

Hagiographical texts may also profitably bring forward other cases of sharing, as Heyden demonstrates for Hierapolis with the legend of Aphroditianus.¹⁰⁰ Admittedly, this kind of literature requires a careful treatment both because of the state of the manuscript transmission (with chronological anticipations, translations, rewritings, cuttings, or on the contrary interpolations, and so on) and the ideological discourse they display.¹⁰¹ Yet, they abound in notations that can be checked through other testimonies, as with the polemical, anti-heretical texts. Spampinato rightly speaks in this volume of a “strategy of assimilation to idolatry” (p. 176) when Epiphanius draws a pagan portrait of the so-called Platonic Gnostics; one must ask to which extent such narratives testify to a religious *topos* in a specifically oriented literature only, or if there could have been an actual sharing of religious conceptions or practices, if not always of places – one can mention the Ophites in Asia Minor or the Hypsistarians according to their picture by Gregorius Nazianzus in Cappadocia. However, hagiographical literature might be mined further to reveal competitive sharing. The homiletic literature, the priests’ sermons, can also offer a fruitful ground because it is precisely concerned with the daily sharing of spaces.¹⁰² The editors opened the way by paying attention to the discourses of John Chrysostom in Antioch; other cases of *koinônia* within the cities as “religious places” on the occasion of collective ceremonies might be included into the inventory,¹⁰³ like the Maiuma festivals which have their origin in a pagan tradition and which were celebrated East and West

⁹⁸ For the “intra-Christian competition” at *martyria* which might bring evidence out of the field, see already normative positions in M. Lenkaiytė Osterman, p. 83.

⁹⁹ See Rebillard 2003.

¹⁰⁰ See Heyden 2016, ch. 1–6, for the example of a miracle in the temple of Hera and the appearance of Dionysus. See in this volume Heyden, pp. 154–156.

¹⁰¹ See recently the methodological *caveant* of Pont 2020, 29–38, and the historical results of a rigorous methodology in Laniado 2022.

¹⁰² See also the conciliar prohibitions of regular contacts such as accepting presents from Jews or heretics, Canon 37 of the synod of Phrygian Laodicea at the end of the 4th century.

¹⁰³ See K. Heyden in this volume p. 163: “Perhaps belonging to the city and region was more important to people of that time than some unique religious belonging or identity”. *Theodosian Code* 16.10.3 (in 342) permits the opening of extra-urban sanctuaries because of the *ludi* and other *agones*, attended by all the population, whatever their religious affiliations; see also *infra* n. 107. Legal dispositions cared to their funding, *Theodosian Code* 6.4.4 (339), 5 (340) and 7 (354). The *ludi compitales*, *Palatini* and *Castorum* in Ostia are still registered in the Polemius Silvius calendar in 449.

up to the 8th century.¹⁰⁴ Κοινωνεῖν and συνεορτάζειν with the “other” were forbidden as such by the Council of Laodicea (Lenkaitytè Ostermann, pp. 76–79). Ecclesiastical authorities promoted clear-cut religious boundaries in order to counteract mixed, daily life experiences. Lately, newly-published kinds of documents, namely graffiti, have brought to light more information on daily interactions and shared places, as Talloen rightly notes in his contribution (pp. 106–108). Whatever the methodological questions raised by their use, graffiti operate as the tags in our contemporary world, *i. e.*, as identity claims. In Smyrna, the graffiti inscribed on the walls of the basilica in the 2nd century attest to a multi-religious frequentation: they reveal the presence of Christians at a very early date (2nd century) in a building which was a central public shared place.¹⁰⁵ In a similar daily-life context, documentary papyri of the 3rd and 4th centuries discovered in Egypt also attest to a shared frequentation of civic places by pagans and Christians (especially when the latter have a civic office), if not a “sharing of cult places” according to a strict definition.¹⁰⁶ In the ancient city, cult places housed civic, common ceremonies like the *uota* for the emperor at the beginning of the year in January.¹⁰⁷ On this occasion, in mid-5th century Ravenna, the Christians received the gods in their houses through figures bearing their masks and parading throughout the city.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, if this was not properly a “religious” sharing of cult places, it was a sharing of the “religiospaces” at least, eventually matching the editors’ wide definition.

Finally, leaving the physical spaces for their representation, attention could be paid to what Heyden calls “a spiritual sharing” (p. 161), made of traditions and legends or myths.¹⁰⁹ These “places” as *lieux de mémoire*, sharing a cultural memory and imaginary,¹¹⁰ were easier to appropriate and integrate because they were not defiled and spoiled by actual practices anymore, and could therefore legitimately be places of “active sharing”, although at unequal levels.

104 *Theodosian Code* 16.6.2 (October 2, 399). See Belayche 2004b (with previous bibliography), and Lipiński 2013, 932–937 for its Semitic connection.

105 Bagnall *et al.* 2016. More generally, see Ward-Perkins, Felle 2021.

106 See Blouin 2022.

107 See *Theodosian Code* 16.10.8 (November 30, 382): the *dux* of Osroene decrees the opening of the pagan temples for the public *uota*; see also 16.10.17 (in 399) on the protection of *festos conuentus ciuium et communem omnium laetitia* and 12.1.176 (in 413) for the festive days in honor of the emperors as *dies festi et legitimi*.

108 The text of Peter Chrysologos is quoted by Scheid 1998, 360 n. 27.

109 In Hierapolis, the legendary motives common to both the pagan tradition (according to Lucian of Samosata) and the *Legend of Aphroditianus*, K. Heyden in this volume, pp. 155–157.

110 See Fournet 2020. In this volume, see M. Giorda, p. 120: spaces are “imbued with identities, memories, and values”.

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Antagonistic Tolerance in the Late Antique Eastern Empire

The View from Rumelia

Robert M. Hayden

When I was asked to contribute to the workshop from which this collection stems, I was intrigued but a bit hesitant. As the organizers had noted in their Call for Papers, I have worked for more than twenty years on a model of competitive sharing of religious sites, sometimes including conflict over them, a model that I think has wide if not universal applicability. While my colleagues and I have done ethnographic, historical, and archaeological research in various places from South India through Anatolia and the Balkans, plus Portugal, Mexico, and Peru, the Eastern Roman Empire in Late Antiquity was not part of our research plan. So, considering the potential utility of the Antagonistic Tolerance model in this new context really appealed to me.

On the other hand, as Clifford Geertz said many years ago, the academy is comprised of multiple small communities – non-territorial intellectual villages, if you will – with their own local cultures: sets of understandings, vocabularies, specialized literatures, and other presumptions about what a mature citizen of that community knows.¹ In the workshop I was a visitor to a foreign village, and thus not very able to comment on the specifics of many of the ongoing debates within that community.

Yet while the intellectual village of specialists on Late Antiquity is foreign to me, many of the territories they focus on are not, since I have been studying the Balkans for forty years. The term “Balkans”, of course, is itself a consequence of the 500 or so years of Ottoman rule over the regions now known as Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia, as well as parts of Croatia and

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1 Geertz 1982.

Hungary for shorter periods.² Pre-Ottoman conquest, these regions are generally seen as having been Byzantine or post-Byzantine – but in the intellectual village of Late Antiquity studies, these were territories largely of Thrace, Dacia, Macedonia, Moesia, Achaëa, Asia, and Pontus, thus most of the area of interest for this workshop.

Seeing that region as “Late Roman” is interesting, because the Eastern Empire continued to exist in one configuration or another until the 15th century, and nominally even after that. Upon conquering Constantinople in 1453, Sultan Mehmed II adopted the title of *Kayser-i Rûm*, or Caesar of Rome, and the Muslim nobility in late 18th- and early 19th-century Hyderabad, India, called the Ottoman sultan the Emperor of Rome.³ Indeed, the title was not extinguished until 1922, with the abolition of the Sultanate. Though it lasted far longer, the claim of the Ottoman sultan to be Caesar of Rome from 1453 until 1922 is no stranger than that of the monarchs of England assuming the title of Empress or Emperor of India from 1857 to 1947.

To the Ottomans, today’s Balkans and much of western Anatolia were Rumelia, the land of the Rum, the Romans; and most of the Christian inhabitants of it were the Rum millet. That both the terms “Balkans” and “Byzantine” have largely negative implications in western European languages and scholarship is a manifestation of Orientalism,⁴ while using the term Late Roman for what may better be seen as Maximum Eastern Empire might be one of Occidentalism, defining the East in terms of conditions attributed to the West. Since Christianity is so important to the story, it is especially odd to see the reference point being Rome, since the first seven ecumenical councils, which established much of what is still common to most forms of Christianity, took place in or near Constantinople, not Rome.

Since Late Antiquity is not my field, I will not venture into the disputes over defining the period, but I hope to show in what follows that viewing the Eastern Empire from the perspective of Rumelia offers several analytical advantages. One is that doing so compels recognition that, for the Eastern Empire, the interface with Islam cannot be excluded from considerations of religious transformations. In so far as Late Antiquity is taken to refer to the displacement of Roman paganism by (forms of) Christianity, the arrival of (forms of) Islam beginning in the 7th century seems relevant, since the patterns of interaction between early Muslims and the Christians and Jews in the places where Islam had just arrived presents a dynamic of competitive interaction in the development of religious spaces⁵ that seems very similar to that seen between Christians, Jews,

2 Hayden 2016a, and Todorova 1997.

3 Dalrymple 2002, 71.

4 See Bakić-Hayden 2002.

5 See, e.g., Guidetti 2009, 2013.

and pagans slightly before or contemporaneous with them. Thus, while Chapter 1 of this volume refers to a less than clear-cut tripartition between pagans, Jews, and Christians, the development of Islam from the same roots as Judaism and Christianity lets us consider a quadripartite set of interactions, with the fourth religious referent no more clearly delineated than the others. That the distinctions between pagans, Jews, and Christians resulted from efforts by writers at the time to “try to draw rigid boundaries between different groups”,⁶ applies equally to Islam. The debates and divisions within Muslim communities soon after the death of the Prophet of Islam rival those within Christianity from its earliest days, and early Muslims, like Jews and Christians shortly before them, also had to deal with forms of paganism.

The Antagonistic Tolerance model explains long-term patterns of relationships between members of groups that live in close interaction and identify themselves and each other as Self and Other largely on the basis of religion, but with that distinction reinforced by other social attributes.⁷ Thus the religious distinction is often marked by differences in naming, kinship and fictive kinship reckoning, diet, modes of dress, and preferred or prohibited forms of political and economic activity; they are also often marked by prohibitions on intermarriage. The Antagonistic Tolerance model predicts that relations between such groups will be marked by relations of dominance and subordination, or contestation over dominance, with some periods of equilibrium, often because local relations are controlled by a larger political authority. Further, the Antagonistic Tolerance model anticipates that the long-term patterns are of largely peaceable interaction for long periods of time, but with brief periods of violence as an established system of dominance is challenged and perhaps changed, even inverted.

Religious sites are important to the model, as loci of interactions between people identifying with different groups, but also as indicators of dominance in specific ethnographic presents, and changes in dominance through time. That is, control over key religious sites is a marker of dominance, and a change in dominance is often marked by transformations in the physical structures at single sites and in the competing religiouscapes.

As it happens, and not at all by chance, the territories of formerly Ottoman spaces in Anatolia and Rumelia offer really great opportunities to study these processes. I say this is not by chance because the extraordinary studies from 1896 to 1916 in Greece and still-Ottoman Turkey by the British archaeologist and ethnologist Frederick Hasluck, on religious sites shared, contested, and “transferred” between Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities, published

6 See the chapter by M. Attali and F. Massa in this volume.

7 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 10–11.

posthumously in 1929 and still in print,⁸ set a research agenda on this topic that has inspired much work since about 2000, including my own,⁹ and the “Shared Sacred Sites” project’s “Visual Hasluck” digital presentation.¹⁰ While my work has looked at the processes of competition over sites and their transformations and even transfers between groups over time, most other authors have looked at the elements of sharing seen at specific sites at specific times. My colleagues and I, however, have come to realize that focusing on single sites at specific moments in time is not enough. It is necessary to focus on the interactions of members of religiously identified communities at multiple sites through time, the form of analysis explained in the next section.

1. Intertemporal interplays of competing religioscapes

While it is usually good for a scholar to have authored a well-known article, in this case, this author wishes it were possible to direct all who search for his 2002 article on Antagonistic Tolerance to the 2016 book instead.¹¹ The book was the result of a major interdisciplinary and comparative international research project that engaged in multi-national fieldwork and other research from 2007 to 2012, in order to test and develop the original Antagonistic Tolerance model¹² in the light of various criticisms that had been made of it. The result is what my colleagues and I see as a much-improved model of competitive sharing of religious sites and wider spaces.

Important differences can be seen in the definitions of Antagonistic Tolerance that we put forth in 2016, compared to that of the 2002 article. My 2002 article defined “tolerance” in my model as a “pragmatic adaptation to a situation in which repression of the other group’s practices may not be possible”. However, I no longer hold to that definition. The research conducted in the larger, comparative 2007 to 2012 Antagonistic Tolerance project led us to change the definition to “enduring the presence of the Other but not embracing it, as long as one group is clearly dominant over others”.¹³ This change is part of the general development of the model away from looking only at individual sites in specific ethnographic presents (or other moments of data isolation and observation – e.g., “horizon” as used in archaeology; or a historical moment analyzed), to instead always analyzing sites in wider geographical contexts of networks of religious sites of the same and other communities, or “relioscapes”. More precise-

8 Hasluck 1973 [1929].

9 See, e.g., Barkey, Barkan 2015; Hayden 2002, 2005, 2013, 2016a.

10 See <https://www.sharedsacredsites.net/visual-hasluck-1>.

11 Hayden *et al.* 2016. See also the Preface in this volume.

12 Hayden 2002.

13 Hayden *et al.* 2016.

ly, a religioscape is the distribution in spaces through time of the physical manifestations of specific religious communities and of the populations that built them.¹⁴

Note that a religioscape involves analyzing distributions of sites, and changes in the attributes of specific sites, through time. We had found in our research that, in many cases, structures on a single location underwent stages of development as competing religious communities attained dominance and transformed them to fit the standards of their own religion at that moment. Peter Talloen's chapter in this volume analyzes a number of such cases in Late Antiquity, noting that "there does not seem to have been much active sharing of religious sites going on between the different religious groups, but rather a sequential replacement of one sacred landscape by another". This observation is perfectly congruent with the Antagonistic Tolerance model, as are the examples he gives in the paper.¹⁵ We developed the concept of *intertemporality* to inform such sequential analyses, recognizing that sites may go through stages of such development, which often keep some elements of the earlier physical structure while changing other.¹⁶ The logic of Antagonistic Tolerance analysis is thus spelled out in the book as "analyzing trajectories of interaction rather than conditions of multiculturalism", and explained further in a discussion of methodological mandates.¹⁷

Focusing only on single sites reflects the strategy of my 2002 article, and the original research presumption of the AT project. However, the research done in the larger project from 2007 to 2012 made it clear that doing so gave us a view of events at any given site at any given moment that was seriously misleading. We came to see sites not just as loci of interaction between persons of different communities at specific moments, but rather realized that control over the physical aspects of sites was indicative of relations between the interacting communities on larger levels.

In this context, the careful consideration given to defining "religious sites" in Chapter 1 of this volume marks a real advance in conceptualizing the notion. The authors note that "the ancient city ... can be regarded as a shared religious space since it hosted a plurality of cults", but regard "sites" as "specific locations visited by individuals or groups".¹⁸ Their key definition is very useful: "the expression 'religious sites' refers either to places hosting rituals or to places where one or more religious identities are displayed and/or claimed".¹⁹ The places need

14 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 14–15; see also Hayden, Walker 2013.

15 See the chapter by P. Talloen in this volume.

16 See Hayden *et al.* 2016, 14–15, 71.

17 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 15–17.

18 See the article by M. Attali and F. Massa in this volume, p. 22.

19 *Ibid.*

not necessarily be bounded and some are “simultaneously material, immaterial, and idealized spaces”,²⁰ even fictional ones developed for polemical purposes. They ground this definition in the patterns of scholarship and availability of evidence for Late Antiquity, and it is just such an elaboration of a concept that was originally developed in regard to understanding other contexts. Thus, I think that the model that they develop will be useful for scholars interested in shared and contested religious spaces in other times and places.

Competitive changes can occur at sites so defined. Thus the “Christian occupation of a site is realized by claiming and marking of the territory” by inserting a Christian site near a temple, for example.²¹ This is where the concept of religioscape is crucial. According to the Antagonistic Tolerance model, what is being defined here as an individual site should be seen instead as a node on a religioscape; bringing two religioscapes into contiguity in one space is inherently a competitive exercise, and the Antagonistic Tolerance methodology analyzes the physical features of the structures to interpret claims of/challenges to dominance. If/when one structure is incorporated into the other, or destroyed, that node vanishes from that religioscape – unless, of course, members of the relevant community continue to attend but in subordinated roles, in which case the religioscapes overlap, that site being a node on each.

So, considering inter-temporality is necessary to evaluate the developments of structures in the nodes of competing religioscapes. Thus Chapter 1 says that it is not necessary that people of different affiliations visit a place at the same hour of the same day but that they both consider it relevant religious space.²² By the current Antagonistic Tolerance model, this situation may be seen as overlapping nodes of two religioscapes, and the crucial questions are: who controls the space? And how is sequencing arranged? These considerations reveal dominance in fact. Our view in the Antagonistic Tolerance project was that manifesting dominance is always a strategic decision, and so it is not contrary to our model that a religiously identified leader of a polity would make local concessions to those who are generally subordinated. Indeed, we expect it under some circumstances, and our concepts of centrality and perceptibility help see when and where that might occur. Dominance needs to be established and can be challenged, with response made to such challenges. A leader linked with one religious community may still make concessions to other communities if s/he needs their support; or if s/he fears that it would be costly to try to simply (re) impose firm rule.

Thus, the Ottoman *Kayser-i Rûm* seems to have acted like earlier Roman emperors when necessary. For example, when Mehmed II took Constantinople

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

in 1453, he seized the Hagia Sophia and immediately converted it into a mosque, but also explicitly promised the Greeks that he would not take their other churches and shrines in the city (though he and his successors later did so). The concessions made at that moment to the Greeks, who still formed the great majority of the population of the city and comprised almost all of the workforce, pacified them after their central religious shrine had been converted. At the other end of Ottoman rule, after the Serbian uprisings of 1804 to 1815 and 1817 to 1830, and the success of the Greek war of independence in 1821 to 1830, the Ottomans tried to pacify their increasingly rebellious Christian subjects by not only permitting them to build new churches for the first time in 400 or so years (contrary to most schools of Muslim law), but actually contributed money towards building them, during the period called the Tanzimat [“reorganization”], 1839–1876. With very few exceptions, however, these churches were not permitted in the centers of towns, or in proximity to mosques. There are still many such churches from that period throughout what was the late Ottoman empire, with their dedication plaques – I have seen them in Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian and am sure some also exist in Arabic, Georgian, and other local languages of the late empire – that thank either Sultan Abdülmecid I (ruled 1839–1861) or Abdülaziz (ruled 1861–1876) for his contribution towards building the churches. The attempt at mollifying the Christian populations did not work – some of those churches became the foci of nationalist independence movements by people claiming to be Christian nations and needing liberation from Muslim rule, while those in Anatolia became stables, stores, etc. when the Greeks were expelled from the new Republic of Turkey in 1923. The efforts at appeasement in order to establish or preserve dominance are perfectly in keeping with the Antagonistic Tolerance model’s views of dominance as a condition that could be challenged, and of the strategies of rulers trying to divert such challenges.

Centrality is a key factor here.²³ And centrality can move as a city develops. Thus, I would urge that the concept of centrality be considered for the analysis of sites in Late Antiquity, as a condition that makes an exhibition of dominance more likely, and a challenge to it as more likely to bring a response. Peripherality, on the other hand, is more congenial to the preservation of shrines of the formerly dominant, and of their being able to create new shrines, which might be attended as well by member of the dominant community.

23 See Hayden *et al.* 2016, 35–43 on indicators.

2. A case study from ca. 25 BCE to ca. 2010 CE: The Augustus Temple/ Hacı Bayram mosque and *türbe* in Ankara

Some of these points may be made clearer by a brief intellectual excursion from the Late Roman Empire to Rumelia and back. As will be seen, there are some similar patterns of inter- and intra-religious interactions in both, and the models and methods used to analyze Rumelia have relevance for the Eastern Roman Empire in Late Antiquity.

Let me start with one of the best-known temples of the Eastern Roman Empire, that of Augustus and Roma in Ankara (fig. 1).²⁴

The temple stands on what may have been a Phrygian temple to Cybele and/or Men, though this is not certain. The location is central to what was Ankara, from before the Roman accession to power there through the founding nearby of the Republic of Turkey by Atatürk in 1923; the first building of the Turkish Grand National Assembly was near there from 1924 to 1960. The Temple of Augustus and Roma was built ca. 25 BCE and is noteworthy now not only because it still stands to a height of about 15 meters in parts, but because of its nearly complete inscriptions in Latin and Greek of the *Res Gestae divi Augusti*.

Christianity arrived early in Ancyra, and as elsewhere in varying contesting forms.²⁵ Julian visited and is reputed to have tortured to death one of the local bishops, who thus became the martyr Basil of Ancyra, though one scholar has recently argued that the Christian martyr and his cult was a transformation of a local pagan deity and his cult.²⁶ The city produced a number of other local saints and their cults, with some having churches dedicated to them.²⁷ I will return later to local saints and the possible merging of saintly figures, but otherwise will not spend much time on Christian Ancyra, in part because there is so little left to see of it.²⁸ The important point for my purposes is that the temple of Augustus and Roma was converted to serve Christian purposes, sometime between the 4th and early 7th centuries. The conversion involved removing the north-eastern wall of the *cella* and adding on a rectangular apse, plus opening up windows on the long walls; Christian symbols were also inscribed on the walls. Clive Foss suggests that the structure may have been used as a monastery as well as a church.²⁹

With the ascendancy of Islam in Ankara, this important place in the city became the base of Hacı Bayram Veli, a local Muslim spiritual figure who found-

24 See generally Gökdemir *et al.* 2015; Serin 2018.

25 Foss 1977.

26 Busine 2019.

27 Foss 1977, 34–35.

28 See Serin 2011.

29 Foss 1977, 65–66.



Fig. 1: Augustus Temple (right), Hacı Bayram mosque (left) and türbe (center). The temple was built ca. 25 BCE to Augustus as a god, was later transformed into a church, and later still incorporated into the mosque (see fig. 2). Highly unusually, the minaret of the mosque rises from the complex. Photo by Robert M. Hayden, 2009.

ed a sufi order and in 1425 built a mosque not only near the Augustus temple structure but literally intersecting it, the SE corner of the mosque overlapping the SE corner of the temple structure (fig. 2).

This structural oddity was soon accompanied by others: in 1429, Hacı Bayram's followers built his tomb (*türbe*) at the junction of the mosque and temple. The result is that the *mihrab* wall of the mosque, which should direct prayers towards Mecca, is off by about 60 degrees for that purpose but is directly oriented towards the body of the saint. To cap the unusual features, the minaret at the site is attached to the *türbe*, the tomb of the saint, rather than to the mosque, a placement rarely if ever found elsewhere. But then, it is also not common to have a mosque named after the founder of one of the dervish orders. As for the structure that had been the temple, there is some evidence that it was used as a *medresa*, or Islamic school, while drawings and photographs from the 19th century show that there were Muslim tombs within the walls, including in the part that had been the apse of the church. The SW wall of the structure also served as support for houses crowded up next to it, so that in some photographs the temple structure is hard to make out.

The next major transformation came with Atatürk's revolution. The Ottoman Sultan whose dynasty he ended was also not only Caesar of Rome but Caliph, and Muslim religious leaders were among the strong opponents of the revolution. Atatürk's Republic of Turkey abolished the Caliphate and was proclaimed a secular state in which the Sunni Islam of the majority was tolerated but not state-supported, while non-Sunni forms, notably the dervish orders, were suppressed. The dervish orders were closed in 1925, including the *türbe* of Hacı Bayram Veli, though local legends held that the saint re-appeared to his followers while frightening the guards at the place, and in 1950 the *türbe* was re-opened, and remains a popular place for devotees to visit and seek blessings from the saint.³⁰ By 1964 the sites dedicated to the founders of almost all of the dervish orders had been re-opened, though the nominally secular state turned some into museums, and discouraged or prohibited non-Sunni forms of worship.³¹

At the same time that it was preventing visitors from visiting the tomb of Hacı Bayram Veli, the new Republic cleared away the buildings around the temple and the Muslim tombs within it, and separated it off as a historical site. The impetus for this transformation was Mussolini's celebration in 1937 of the 2000th anniversary of Augustus;³² in re-creating the structure as a Roman temple, Atatürk wanted to demonstrate the Roman roots of Turkey, thus its inherent Europeaness. So the ancient marble structure, a temple once more even if of a reli-

30 Hayden *et al.* 2016, 55–56.

31 Harmanşah *et al.* 2014; Hart 2015.

32 See Kallis 2011.



Fig. 2: Intersection of the Augustus Temple structure (white marble wall) and Hacı Bayram mosque (roof structure); the wall of the türbe is in conversation with that of the temple. Photo by Robert M. Hayden, 2009.

gion long ago eliminated, stood fenced off but still attached to the mosque and tomb of Hacı Bayram Veli.

Actually, the question of the connection between the temple and the mosque and *türbe* of Hacı Bayram Veli was perhaps still present into the 21st century. In September 2006, my Turkish colleagues and I saw a man in a Muslim prayer position facing the temple, not either the mihrab wall of the mosque or the tomb of Hacı Bayram Veli. In various visits, we also saw sugar and other sweets, common offerings given to accompany prayers to sufi saints, near the temple, and when were able to get inside the temple structure in 2007, we found notes seeking assistance that had been left there, a common practice at sufi shrines. What was interesting about them was that some were left under rubble that was clearly Christian, with carved crosses as decorations. It is highly unlikely that the people leaving the requests were Christians, but unfortunately, it turns out that ethnographers in the field can be as frustrated as historians in the archive when the key information one wants is not obtainable, so my colleagues and I are not able to say exactly why prayers were being directed to and left within the closed-off remains of a Roman temple, instead of the tomb of the saint literally connected to it.

Brief as it was, this quick run from Augustan Roman Imperial and pagan Ancyra through Byzantine Christian Angora through Muslim and post-Ottoman Republican Ankara raises several issues that I think can profitably be pursued in Late Antiquity. One is that while we speak of religions such as Christianity and Islam, and so did the people of those times, these were never monolithic in theology and even less so in practice. Second, much local practice of religion was not necessarily tied closely to any larger theology, but rather was oriented towards efficacy in attaining the aid of a local god, martyr or saint for personal benefit, and such figures were generally quite local in their renown. Third, once figures such as martyrs and saints are brought into the picture, not only may practices at their shrines frequently be contrary to various theologies, but the identities of those to whom they are directed may be hard to distinguish with clarity. Let me pick up some of those themes, as they play out in Rumelia. Then I will turn to a larger pattern of change of religioscapes through time.

3. Religious supplicants and practitioners ignoring doctrine

On the outskirts of Sofia, Bulgaria is a neighborhood now known as Knyazovo (“the King’s”), but until the end of Ottoman rule in 1878 was known as “Bali Efendi”, eponymously after a 16th-century dervish of either the Bayrami or Halveti order whose *türbe* is still located there.³³ The *türbe* is located behind a late 19th-century Bulgarian Orthodox church dedicated to the Holy Prophet Ilya

33 Kmetova, Mikov 1998.

(Hebrew *Eliyahu*, Greek *Elias*, Arabic *Ilyas*), one of the Hebrew saints who is revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims all. Before Bulgarian independence in 1878 there was a lodge (*tekke*) of Bali Efendi's order where the church now stands.

Visitors to the tomb in 2009 would see a sign in the window saying in Bulgarian "Do not light candles – pray to Allah" (*молете се на Аллах*). The sign had been put by the government-recognized Muslim authority, the Muftistvo (*мюфтийство*), which controls the *türbe*. The Muftistvo is exclusively a Sunni body, which therefore regards praying to a saint instead of to Allah as abhorrent, and sees lighting candles as an Orthodox Christian practice, not a Muslim one. Yet candles are commonly lit at dervish shrines throughout the Balkans, not least at Bali Efendi's tomb, where next to the sign prohibiting lighting candles one could see candle stubs and old wax. As it happens, some of them may have been lit by Christians, who also visit the tomb, but most visitors are Muslims. In many such sites in the Balkans, a careful observer will see that Christians light tan or brown beeswax candles and Muslims either white or green paraffin ones.

At other shrines to saints in the region, practices undertaken by both Muslims and Christians may involve tying strings to a window or tree to mark a prayer, leaving sugar or sweets, leaving an offering of cloth, leaving a written message asking for a specific blessing, or leaving an amulet as a votive offering symbolizing a specific request: a wax ear from someone wanting hearing restored, a silver eye from those wanting their sight restored or cataracts to disappear, a figure of a baby by a woman wanting to become pregnant, a wax leg or one from a doll from someone lame (fig. 3).

While such votives were commonly left to Greek and Roman gods, none of this would be considered Islamic behavior by Sunni authorities, and may not be highly regarded by all Christian ones, but such disapproval is irrelevant to those who seek efficacy in gaining the blessing of the saint, rather than following orthodoxy as demanded by religious leaders. The Turkish religious authorities have posted signs in many such shrines listing a range of practices as prohibited by Islam, including:

one should not make vows to those in the tomb (*adak adanmaz*), or perform animal sacrifice (*kurban kesilmez*), light candles (*mum yakılmaz*), tie rags or other cloths (*bez-çaput bağlanmaz*), leave money or stones (*taş-para yapıştırılmaz*), enter bowing and crawling (*eğilerek ve emekliyerek girilmez*), throw money (*para atılmaz*), leave behind food (*yenilecek şeyler bırakılmaz*), [or press your hands and face (on the sarcophagus)] (*el-yüz sürülmez*),³⁴ expect help or a cure (*türbe ve yatırlardan medetşifa umulmaz*), cir-

34 Translation of this phrase by Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir; original reads "wipe one's face with one's hands".



Fig. 3: Votives left to accompany prayers at the Church of St. Mamas/ St. Mamas Müzesi, Morphou, Cyprus/ Güzulyurt, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The building was a church until the expulsion of the Greek-speaking Christian inhabitants of Morphou in 1974 and the creation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, with the town resettled by Turkish-speaking Muslims and renamed Güzulyurt. The building is now a museum (*Müzesi*) but occasionally Christians are permitted to worship there. Museum employees say that votives are left by both Christian and Turkish visitors, the latter presumably Muslim. Photo by Robert M. Hayden, 2011.

cumambulate around the tomb (*türbe ve yatırların etrafında dönülmez*), or lay in the tomb (*türbe içinde yatılmaz*).³⁵

The fact that the authorities feel the need to prohibit these practices indicates that some people, at least, are doing them. A similar prohibition has also been stated on sleeping to incubate dreams at the tomb of Hızır in Hatay, also visited by Christians as a shrine of St. George; the celebration day of both is May 6.³⁶

It is important to realize that people engaging in such non-doctrinal activities do not regard themselves as thereby not belonging to their religion. We might compare their actions to those of Roman Catholics in the USA, at least: the Church prohibits the use of birth control, but were the priests and bishops to try to exclude all parishioners who practice it, they would have few in their congregations older than 15 but younger than 50. So Americans who consider them-

³⁵ Hart 2015, 29.

³⁶ Kreinath 2014.

selves good Catholics regularly engage in activities prohibited by the Church, in these situations in which people put their own immediate health and welfare ahead of religious doctrines, which of course the Church knows, but is powerless to prevent. Thus, it is not doctrine that defines what practices members of religion engage in, even though doctrine is what defines the religions they claim to adhere to.

4. Religious groups and boundaries

The seeming conundrum, that doctrine defines the religion but does not determine many of the actions of those who claim to be its adherents, can be resolved by reference to the work of Fredrik Barth on ethnic groups and boundaries. Barth defined ethnic groups as *ascriptive*, each as “having a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order”.³⁷ In this formulation, it is the *distinction itself* that defines the group, not the cultural characteristics of the members, since those may change without impact on the understandings of the people concerned that they belong to different groups.³⁸ The distinction thus presumes difference, but does not define the nature of it.

Barth’s model of ethnic groups works very well for religious communities. The Late-Byzantine theologian Gregory Palamas actually gave a very Barthian answer to the Muslims who in 1354 tried to convince him through argument that Christians should honor their Prophet, as the Muslims honor Isa (Jesus) as a prophet: “Had we been able to agree in debate, we might as well have been of one faith.”³⁹ A different variant can be seen in the 21st-century practice of dissimulation by Alevi Bulgarian Turks, who pretend to adopt Sunni practices in order to avoid some difficulties and in so doing, reaffirm to themselves that they are not Sunnis, but Alevis; and that they are Muslims even though their practices are not approved by the Muftistvo.⁴⁰ Thus they maintain the boundary between them even as their practices appear to converge.

The ascriptive nature of religious groups means that adherence to sectarian doctrine may not be the primary concern of members in their actions. For example, in 2006 the majority of non-tourist visitors to the Roman Catholic Church of St. Anthony in Istanbul on Tuesdays, the most heavily visited day, were Muslims, and they engaged in practices not closely tied to Christianity or even to St. Anthony, though many requested assistance in warding off the evil eye or evil spirits. Some engaged in practices that clumsily mimicked those of Christians,

³⁷ Barth 1969, 11.

³⁸ Barth 1969, 15–16.

³⁹ Arnakis 1951, 110.

⁴⁰ Sözer 2014.

and the priests tried to keep non-Christians from partaking of communion, not always with success.⁴¹ That neither Sunni authorities nor Roman Catholic ones would approve of such practices is irrelevant to the people engaging in them, who are seeking benefits tied to the spirituality attributed to the place but not necessarily to the theology of any religion. Their seeking help in the Catholic space did not serve to make these Muslims Catholics, in their own eyes or those of the priests. As per Barth's model, the boundaries of the groups remain even as practices seem not to fit well into them.

In systems defined by ascription, the continuity of each group depends on the maintenance of the boundary distinguishing it from others, and not on continuity of any specific cultural traits.⁴² Magdalena Lubanska has noted that cooperation at mixed sites is a "strategy for preserving the religious autonomy of each group".⁴³ Therefore, rather than repeat the findings of the many studies of spaces in which members of differing religions communities interact, I draw on recent ethnographic studies to show how such people maintain their separate communal identities in some of their activities concerning the place, even as other practices appear to be syncretic.

5. Practices of separateness even at single sites

Not only may supplicants ignore doctrine, they may also perform rituals at shrines that are used by members of other religions, and which may even appear to belong to those other communities. Ethnographers working in the territories of formerly Ottoman Rumelia have frequently observed situations in which Muslims pray in a church or shrine to a Christian saint, or Christians in the shrine of a Muslim saint (Christians praying in mosques are hard to find, unless the mosque was converted into a church). A number of strategies are employed:

5.1. Dual identities of a deity or saint

A deity or saint may have one name and set of attributes to members of one religious community and another name and attributes to members of other communities. For instance, at what is now the St. Nikola church (but was clearly originally built as a Muslim *türbe*) in Makedonski Brod, North Macedonia, Christians say that St. Nikola is there, while Muslims say that Hadir Baba, a Bek-tashi saint is buried there.⁴⁴ Another variant is seen in Obrochishte, Bulgaria in

⁴¹ Albera, Fliche 2012.

⁴² Barth 1969, 14.

⁴³ Lubanska 2013, 107.

⁴⁴ Bowman 2010, 201; Koneska, Jankuloski 2009, 14–16.

what Muslims call the *türbe* of the dervish Akyazala Baba and Christians the tomb of St. Atanas. While the building was clearly built as a Muslim *türbe*, according to Christians, the two saints were “best friends” and did everything together, thus effectively merging them while keeping their separate identities.⁴⁵ Another variant would be the same sacred personage in differing traditions. Thus, Mary the mother of Jesus and Maryam the mother of Isa is the same historical person, as is her son Jesus/Isa; but there is a rather important difference between Maryam, the mother of Isa the Prophet of Islam, and Mary the God-bearer (*Theotokos*) of Jesus, the son of God to Christians. Despite this difference, Muslims attend numerous Christian churches dedicated to Mary, without thereby becoming Christians, or adopting Christian practices.⁴⁶

While I am not accustomed to dealing primarily with literary sources instead of ethnographic and archaeological ones, it is tempting to see what Francesco Massa analyzes as competition over two divinities, Christ and Serapis, as a form of Divine Dissociative Identity Disorder, a period of a dual identity of a single divine being, in this case, a powerful healer in Alexandria.⁴⁷ Cultic “agents”⁴⁸ of each divine personality compete for followers, thus also ultimately for control over key real estate in the city and the perhaps not inconsiderable assets brought to the site by people wishing to engage the power of the divinity to cure them. That adherents of each divine personality display many similarities in ritual observance, and cultic agents complain about this apparent lack of distinction, does not surprise me. Whether they do everything the same way is a different issue, to which we now turn.

5.2. Separate rites/rituals

Members of different religious communities may perform correspondingly different rites or rituals at the same site. The differences in ritual performances between members of different communities may be subtle. For example, Muslims come to the Sveti Bogorodica Prečista Orthodox Christian monastery in Kičevo, Macedonia, in order to be healed of various ailments. A casual visitor will see the Muslims seeming to perform the same acts as the Christians, notably lighting candles before the icons and then praying. More careful observation, though, finds that unlike the Christians, the Muslims do not kiss the icons or cross themselves; the prayers they recite quietly are Muslim ones; and their prayer posture is that of Muslims, with hands open and palms up.⁴⁹ Again, Muslims visiting a

⁴⁵ Erlova 2017; Hasluck 1973 [1929], 113–115; Hayden *et al.* 2016, 63–64.

⁴⁶ Albera 2012a.

⁴⁷ Massa 2017.

⁴⁸ Massa 2017, 269.

⁴⁹ Bowman 2010, 207–209.

church and even praying there does not make them Christians, in their own eyes or that of the Christians. In thinking again about the interactions of followers of Christ and Serapis, I am not surprised that cultic agents for each divine personality may find it strange or offensive that people who claim to follow the other are also engaging in rituals at the shrine; but perhaps they were acting like many Christians and Muslims at healers' shrines in Rumelia two millennia later: retaining the distinction between their separate identities despite apparent commonalities in some practices.

5.3. Temporal spacing of rituals by different communities

Another variant is temporal sequencing of the rituals of different communities. For example, at the Holy Prophet Ilya church near Sofia, Bulgaria, mentioned above, the saint's feast day is celebrated on July 20. Bulgarian Christians come to the church to celebrate on that date according to the Gregorian calendar, which the Bulgarian Orthodox Church adopted in 1968 to replace the Julian calendar. Muslims, however, go to the church on August 2 of the Gregorian calendar, which is July 20 according to the Julian calendar. Since the Muslims celebrate the saint according to the older Christian calendar, which the Christians themselves have given up, the two communities do not overlap in their celebrations of the day. Returning to the St. Nikola church in Makedonski Brod, Macedonia, the main Christian celebration is on St. George's Day, the morning of May 6; the main Muslim celebrations are later that day and on May 7. The Orthodox Christians who control the site permit various Muslim communities to come and perform their own rituals, even preparing the site for the visitors by covering some of the Christian iconography. The members of differing dervish orders (Bektaši, Halevi, Nekšibendi), in turn, arrive separately and do their own rituals, as do Sunnis, thus each community distinguishes themselves from each other.⁵⁰

5.4. Maintaining invisible boundaries

Lastly, boundaries may be maintained that keep members of one community from entering some spaces or engaging in some actions that are open to the other community. Dionigi Albera has summed up interactions between members of different religious communities at mixed sites as usually being "minimal and episodic", with few moments of "communion". He then states that "a subtle management of space preserves invisible boundaries and ensures that some spaces remain inviolable", and that in this regard, "both parties are discreet and

50 Koneska, Jankuloski 2009.

respect the non-spoken rules of noninterference”.⁵¹ His examples include Muslim visitors being denied access to churches when mass is taking place, or directed only to specific parts of a shrine. An especially interesting example is of Muslims who wanted an ill child to be baptized, not as the Christian sacrament of admission to the Church, but as a prophylactic against disease. In response, priests performed what looked like a baptism, but using unblest water from a separate container, not the blessed water used in Christian baptism.

6. From local Roman gods via Christianity and Islam to local Rumelian saints?

Looking backwards from (post-)Rumelia, one sees some possibly similar patterns in the religioscapes: there are large sites to religions widely practiced – major Roman deities, synagogues, major Christian foci (Christ, the Trinity, Holy Wisdom, the Apostles) and mosques – that have gone through varying transformations; and many more smaller sites dedicated to less well-known figures: local pagan gods, Christian martyrs and saints of mainly local fame. I refer here to what David Frankfurter sees as “local religion, involv[ing] perpetual negotiation with a range of ancestral and landscape spirits, as well as more well-known gods”.⁵² I am not postulating that specific pagan deities somehow morphed over the centuries into specific Christian or Muslim saints, but rather that powers associated with specific sites may in many cases have been defined and redefined by people seeking benefits from them, in negotiation with larger religious conceptualizations. The kinds of competitive “negotiations” that go on in such places include the practices of mixing but not necessarily sharing spaces outlined above: saints with dual identities, separate practices, temporal spacing of activities by members of different communities, maintaining invisible boundaries.

Frederick Hasluck did scholarship the critical service of investigating not only prominent and well-known sites, but also many smaller rural ones, and even the continued use of and competition over “natural sanctuaries” such as mountain tops used by Christian monks and some Muslim holy men, and springs,⁵³ and what he referred to as “natural cults” focused on trees, stones and caves.⁵⁴ While many rural pagan temples were destroyed, some were Christianized in Late Antiquity,⁵⁵ and others, tied to natural features such as springs or rock outcroppings, have visible long histories of ritual use. One such site is the

51 Albera 2012b, 238.

52 Frankfurter 2010, 42.

53 Hasluck 1973 [1929], 119–128.

54 Hasluck 1973 [1929], 173–204.

55 Caseau 2004.



Fig. 4: Tomb and tekke of Bektaşi saint Demir Baba, near Ispirih, Bulgaria. The 15th-century tomb is built on a rock outcrop near a spring that were central to a Thracian ritual structure of 4th century BCE. Such locations were also used by Christians for shrines and monasteries, and as of 2009, some local Orthodox Christians were claiming that the Demir Baba complex had displaced an earlier Church of St. George. Photo by Robert M. Hayden, 2009.

spring near Ispirih, Bulgaria and very close to the UNESCO-listed Thracian tomb of Sveshtari, that has visible signs of having been a Thracian ritual place, but also a Bektaşi *tekke* of the local saint Demir Baba, the “Iron Father” (fig. 4).⁵⁶

The site is visited by Muslims and Christians and while the images inside are Muslim, candles are lit in front of them (fig. 5). In 2009, Christians were claiming that the site had been a monastery to St. George before Muslims arrived, and were demanding that a new monastery to this early Christian saint be built in place of the *tekke*.⁵⁷ Trees and mountain tops still figure heavily in veneration at saints’ shrines in the region.⁵⁸

It thus seems to me likely that one set of places to look for potential competitive sharing of religious sites would be small shrines dedicated to lesser-known or local gods and/or saints. How feasible it is to do this, I do not know. A study of the “religious Romanization” of ancient Italy from the 4th century BCE notes the problem of sources because of a “scholarly bias towards monumental architecture and rich finds: research has normally focused on these elements at the expense of less visible and less prestigious archaeological evidence for use of

56 Perkowski 1999.

57 Hayden 2016b, 29.

58 See, e.g., Kreinath 2019.



Fig. 5: Demir Baba türbe, depiction of Imam Ali, the early Islamic leader venerated by Sufi and Shia Muslims. Lighting candles before icons is an Orthodox Christian practice in the Balkans; those candles, however, are usually of brown beeswax. The candles in this picture and found in other Muslim sacred sits in the region are usually white or green paraffin. Photo by Robert M. Hayden, 2009.

sites and nearby settlements”.⁵⁹ That description also fits well the literature on shared/contested sites, or at least, it did until my 2002 article on Antagonistic Tolerance inspired a number of other scholars to approach the topic, leading to several conferences and collected volumes of studies on less well-known sites.⁶⁰ What my colleagues and I have found is that sites that were never well known except locally, and thus not often subjected to close study, have been more revealing of widespread pattern of interaction than are prominent sites, especially those that have been the focus of open conflict between religious communities. For example, I suspect that accounts of interactions at smaller shrines in Constantinople in the 16th century would be better indicators of everyday interactions between Greeks and Muslims than would be a focus on Hagia Sophia or, about fifty years after the Great Church was converted into a mosque, the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus. By the same token, understanding the patterns of interaction through time at sites approached for healing may be quite informative of everyday relations between people affiliated with paganism and Christianity, especially when those relations are traced through at least the first couple of centuries of Muslim presence.

As for what one would look for, I would think that some at least of the practices of separateness discussed above may be amenable to study through literary, historical, and archaeological sources. I would also suggest looking for what otherwise might look like incongruities: references to Christians going to a pagan shrine or the reverse; supposedly “cult objects” appearing at Christian shrines or Christian ones at pagan places; what might otherwise be confusing references as to which saint/ local deity is being revered at a site, and what kinds of blessings are being sought there. Outrage by priests that pagan activities are taking place at a shrine is a promising sign. For example, Christine Shepardson’s recounting of one of Libanius’s orations is interesting: that while many people attend Christian ceremonies, they either call upon no god or on their gods, not the Christian one, and that many such people were more oriented towards the place, the shrine, than to Christianity.⁶¹ While Shepardson notes that such accounts are not of themselves reliable, since their authors were likely advocating for their own position, they are congruent with observations from Rumelia and other places, which gives them some plausibility.

It does seem that until the 6th or 7th century, transformation of a temple into a church was not so common. On the other hand, other forms of architecture could indicate Christian dominance. As it happens, Jelena Bogdanović has recently published a very interesting article on the “Transposition of *Tetrapyla* into the Structural and Symbolic Cores of Byzantine Churches” in which she argues

59 Stek 2015, 10.

60 See Bowman 2012, 2–4.

61 Shepardson 2014, 270–271.

that the *tetrapyla* in eastern cities were transformed or incorporated into Christian structures.⁶² This would manifest Christian dominance while leaving temples unconverted, though perhaps in the shadow of churches built near them.

A key point to keep in mind in any event is that accounts or archaeological horizons present images of delineated, relatively short segments of trajectories of interactions over use and control that may last decades or even longer. Thus, worship of Roman gods at major temples might end and the temples be destroyed or converted, yet healing rituals in smaller shrines, associated with less-known gods, may well continue, with the former god replaced (displaced?) by a saint. Further, it is generally central sites that are transformed first; less prominent ones may remain functioning for years or decades longer. It is for this reason that I recommend not treating Late Antiquity as being sharply defined, and urge taking into account the trajectories at sites that develop with the arrival of Muslims and of exercises of political power by Muslim leaders. These processes have been well studied – indeed, the extraordinary 2012 exhibit on “Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th–9th Century” at the Metropolitan Museum of New York was organized as flowing diachronically from a room with almost all Christian art and architecture and little of Islam, to ending with one with almost all Muslim art and architecture and little of Christianity.⁶³

7. Narrative and spatial mapping of transformations of major sites

Dominance in a city, settlement or region is often indicated by assumption of control over key religious sites within it. As explained above, the Antagonistic Tolerance project started by focusing on such transformations at single sites,⁶⁴ and competitive sharing at them in the long periods between such transformations. However, in conducting the comparative interdisciplinary and multinational teamed research that developed from that idea it became clear that single sites needed to be analyzed as nodes on networks of other sites, of the same religion and others – the religiouscapes noted earlier⁶⁵ – as these networks and the sites that comprise them develop intertemporally.

Transformations of major sites can indicate changes in the relations of dominance and subordination, or of moments of what Hasluck termed “equipoise”, at given moments in time. However, the changing configurations of religiouscapes also indicate some of the spatial parameters of social activity, and thus

62 Bogdanović 2020.

63 See Evans, Ratliff 2012.

64 Hayden 2002.

65 Hayden, Walker 2013.

of smaller shrines, cemeteries, and other sites of religious activity. For this reason, mapping the changing religioscapes through time can be revealing.

In anthropology and archaeology, we think of maps as visual representations of places in physical and social spaces. One of the many pleasant surprises in delving into the literature on Late Antiquity was seeing how some of the writers of the period “painted narrative maps”, to borrow a graceful phrase from Christine Shepardson,⁶⁶ some stressing places associated with the gods, others those of Christianity. Read in conjunction with each other, they tell the story of the changes in the ways control over key places took place.

These narrative maps can be used to draw the kinds of visual ones that some of us are accustomed to, and doing so can aid in understanding long-term patterns of transformations of religious places in wider urban spaces, over centuries. Mattia Guidetti has done this for the city now known as Urfa, formerly Edessa and then al-Ruha.⁶⁷ One can easily see the changes in religious dominance in the town from the 4th to 7th centuries, when two pagan temples and two synagogues were replaced by churches, and new churches were built as the city expanded, to the 7th to 12th centuries, when one of the sites that had been a synagogue then a church, is turned into a mosque in the 9th century, while a 7th-century mosque is annexed to a church in 1032, restored as a mosque in 1084, then turned into the residence of the Latin bishop between 1099 and 1144, before again being made into a mosque in 1146. Meanwhile, a number of the churches built in the 9th century are destroyed in 1146, when one is turned into a mosque. By the final map, 13th to 15th centuries, the churches have all been destroyed or turned into mosques.

These exercises in mapping tell us quite a lot about the wider picture of religious dominance as Edessa became al-Ruha, and how during the second period, 7th to 12th centuries, when the churches were still part of the religioscape, architectural and design features of them were incorporated into Muslim structures with some respect for their aesthetic value, but by the time the churches had been removed from the public scene, this was no longer true. The analysis, of course, is much more multi-faceted and detailed, but I hope that the point is clear: very similar kinds of processes seem to have led to the displacement first of temples and synagogues by churches, then of churches by mosques. There seems to be a general process: just as Christian churches and shrines slowly rose in towns and cities while the temples remained but were slowly displaced, so did mosques arise slowly, while the churches and synagogues remained in use. The recently reported excavation of a 7th-century mosque in Tiberius indicates that it was built close to the church and synagogue, and only replaced with a larger

66 Shepardson 2014, 11.

67 Guidetti 2009.

mosque on the same site after fifty years.⁶⁸ What is gained by extending consideration past the normal endpoints of Late Antiquity is better appreciation of the generality of the patterning of these social processes throughout the longer time span.

8. Conclusion

Looking from Rumelia back to Late Antiquity in the same geographical coordinates is an exercise of perhaps unusually *longue durée*. What I hope to have added, however, is some ways in which scholars working on that earlier period, who seem largely to depend on literary sources, might gain some insights from the ethnographic and archaeological studies done on competitive sharing in the century since Hasluck pioneered the study of shared/contested shrines in the region. The view through the conceptual lenses of Antagonistic Tolerance reveals a range of trajectories of intertemporal interactions, in which political/military leaders have tried to impose divinities from wider geopolitical/geo-religious spaces into localities in a region with many local figures of varying divinity. As time progresses the wider religious traditions sequentially gained dominance in major, central sites, though with their own intra-denominational displays of AT (e.g., various forms of Christianity; among Muslims, Sunni- Shi'a – Alevi-Bektaşî), while trying to gain control over practices at local sites, many of which remain strikingly non-conforming to any larger doctrinal practices. Indeed, the various Christian leaders angered by “pagan” practices at healing shrines in Late Antiquity might well sympathize with the Sunni leaders in contemporary Turkey and the Balkans in the latter’s frustration with “non-Islamic” practices by people who see themselves as Muslims.

Finally, I want to thank the organizers for giving me the chance to visit their academic village, and wander through some of its literatures. The languages common in it are not among the ones I use, the frequent reliance on literary sources not a methodology that I use either, and much of the details of the history are well known to specialists in Late Antiquity but vague at best to me. Still, I have had the feeling that I have visited another intellectual country that is closely related to the one I live in, where the practices are different in detail but seem quite familiar in many patterns of social interaction. This experience has certainly enriched my own work – I hope it might perhaps also be of at least some utility to scholars of Late Antiquity.

⁶⁸ <https://apnews.com/article/israel-jerusalem-coronavirus-pandemic-archaeology-76bda-f039055ee55d8bb77fa581cdb2>.

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Abstracts

Maureen Attali and Francesco Massa, *Sharing Religious Sites in the Late Antique Roman Empire. Definition, Dynamics, Tentative Inventory*

Since recent studies have pointed out that the entirety of Roman Empire did not suddenly become Christian during the 4th century, religious sharing during Late Antiquity has become a popular topic of historical enquiry. Among various terminologies, the phrase “religious sites” – places where rituals were performed or where religious identities were displayed – is preferred because it includes areas made up of several buildings that did not always have the same legal status. Those sites are considered “shared” if they simultaneously held religious significance for people who defined themselves as belonging to different religions. Thus, simultaneous active sharing is distinguished from the successive religious occupation of a same site at different periods, which is considered to be non-sharing. Among the rituals performed at those sites, readings, prayers, as well as the offering of lamps and incense are the most documented. About 20 shared religious sites in the Late Antique (4th to 6th centuries) Eastern Roman Empire are tentatively listed.

Capucine Nemo-Pekelmann, “*Law as a Weapon*”. *The Status of Temples, Heretic Churches, and Synagogues, and the Legal Mechanisms for Their Confiscation and Reallocation to Catholic Churches (4th - 5th centuries)*

The transfer of religious sites in the Eastern Roman Empire is a phenomenon that involves religious, patrimonial and artistic history, and that has also legal aspects. Post-classical Roman law shows that the public temples were *res sacrae* which were inalienable. A part of them belonged to the *res privata* after their confiscation for illicit pagan practices or after their abandonment (*vacantia*). But no law had ordered their general confiscation and even less their transfer to churches. The situation was different for the churches of heretics and for synagogues, which were private property. A derogation procedure from that of the *petitio* allowed their transfer to orthodox Christians, encouraging them to be *delatores*, and the procedure of the *vacantia* was diverted to allow Christians to seize the synagogues.

Manté Lenkaitytė Ostermann, *The (Non-)Sharing of Religious Sites in the Greek Canonical Sources of the 4th Century*

Among the Greek canons (decrees) coming from Church councils of the 4th century, the regulations pertaining to religious sites are found in those of Ancyra (314), of Antioch (ca. 328), of Gangra (ca. 340–342), and of Laodicea (360/380). The religious sites mentioned or alluded to include pagan, Jewish, and Christian places (also those of heretics), each category appearing in a historically and chronologically defined context. Pagan sites appear only in the canons of

Ancyra as places of sacrificial banquets in the context of the recent persecution. In the canons of Laodicea, bans against mingling with pagans implicitly suggest that pagan sites are visited by Christians during public festivals, while Jewish sites appear as shared places used for common festivals, particularly Passover/Easter. Finally, the canons of Antioch and Gangra directed against heretics impose the official places of Christian worship and cult (churches and martyr tombs or shrines) as opposed to private places. This insistence on the use of official churches may be interpreted as evidence to the process of a gradual episcopal monopolization of the Christian worship, increasingly confined to official church buildings.

Peter Talloen, *Competitive Sharing in Late Antique Asia Minor. Religious Sites or a Different Arena?*

Tracing religious competition in the archaeological record of Late Antiquity is notoriously hard. While pagan temples were generally closed during the late 4th to early 5th centuries, the early Christian communities avoided those religious sites at first. Only from the later 5th to early 6th centuries onwards were former religious foci incorporated into the developing Christian landscape, at a time when the remaining pagan population could no longer claim their place there. So, judging by the fate of the temples in Asia Minor at least, there was not much actual sharing of religious sites going on, but rather a replacement of one sacred landscape by another. This hiatus in the use of religious sites urges us to broaden our focus and look at other, public spaces where religious groups could have interacted in Late Antiquity, in order to test the relevance of the competitive sharing concept. The agora – the heart of the ancient city – is an obvious location of such interaction. In Late Antiquity, these spaces of public gathering continued to be frequented by all kinds of groups, regardless of their convictions or beliefs. Therefore, the proposed paper intends to test the relevance of the concept for Late Antique Asia Minor by looking for signs of religious competition in the urban centers of some of the best documented ancient sites of the subcontinent: Aphrodisias (Caria), Ephesos (Ionia), and Sagalassos (Pisidia).

Maria Chiara Giorda, *Sharing Monasteries. Mapping Late Antique Religious Competition at Alexandria*

A predominantly Christian urban public space, built through the dynamics of destruction, occupation, and replacement, Alexandria was an area of competition and sharing between the various Christian denominations, primarily the two patriarchates, Chalcedonian, and non-Chalcedonian. In the urban/peri-urban spaces of Alexandria, there has been a continuous interweaving of histories of coexistence and different forms of resilience, captured in the present study through the three dynamics (i.e., top-down, bottom-up, and middle-up). These dynamics reveal the mixture of forces and the function of places as fragmentary remnants, which have survived the changes in religions over time. By analyzing the monastic sites, this study would like to demonstrate how the institutional strategy of making Alexandria a Christian city by destroying, converting, substituting, and reusing materials from pagan temples worked materially and symbolically, with an aesthetic and architectural transformation of the city. Often religious sites in and around Alexandria were spaces not only of a lived religion but also spaces of the resilience of religious communities or denominations that formed the minorities, whether pagan or Christian, of various factions.

Katharina Heyden, *Hierapolis/Mabbug in Late Antiquity. A Place of Competitive Veneration and Co-Production between Atargatis, the Syrian Mother Goddess, and Mary, the Mother of God?*

When dealing with shared holy places, we are often inclined to operate with notions like tolerance or competition between adherents of different cultic traditions. Such notions presuppose clear religious identities: there have to be people we can identify as Jews or Christians or pagans in order to claim religious sharing. However, concrete historical case-studies may challenge the certainty that such clear identities really existed in Late Antiquity – an assumption that might be especially true of the border regions between the Roman and Persian Empires. This paper examines the source evidence for the sanctuary of Hierapolis/Mabbug in Northern Syria, looking for traces of interactions, both ritual and literary, between the veneration of the Syrian Mother Goddess Atargatis and the Christian figure of Mary as the Mother of God. While the exact nature of this sharing – ritual? semantic? both? – cannot be described with certainty due to the scarcity of the sources, a picture of flexible religious identities at this holy place does emerge. Are we dealing with classical “syncretism” here, or are we faced with diachronic transformations of a pagan cultic site? Perhaps this juxtaposition is too sharp, and it would be more appropriate to think of this case in terms of religious co-production.

Gaetano Spampinato, *“Heretical Places” in Ancient Heresiology. Two Cases of “Competitive Sharing” in the Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis?*

Anti-heretical literature often portrays heretical places as distinct and morally inferior to those of the “orthodox”. Epiphanius of Salamis follows this trend: in the *Panarion*, the condemnation of a group of heretics is reflected in the depiction of their places. However, in two passages Epiphanius describes two groups whose places do not only belong to heretics. The first one is that of the disciples of Epiphanes, who, at his death, erect in his honor a sanctuary in Cephalonia that is attended also by the pagans of the island. The second one, the Messalians, is a group of ascetic people with exaggerated practises who are present in the same monasteries of the “orthodox”. In this article, I analyze the different polemical strategies of the heresiologist against these groups. While the frequentation of the “sanctuary of Epiphanes” presents an opportunity for the association of heretics and pagans, in the case of the Messalians the author emphasizes the potential dangers of the cohabitation between heretics and “orthodox”. This example shows how the problem of sharing places between different Christian groups was a more articulated matter than the schematizations of heresiologists propose.

Nicole Belayche, *Shared Religious Sites in Late Antiquity: An Afterword*

This volume on “shared religious sites” in Late Antique Eastern Mediterranean aims at drawing up models of occupancy dynamics which attest to diverse and complex situations of cohabitation, especially that of “active sharing”, a category developed by the editors after R. Hayden’s “antagonistic tolerance” model. The editors adopt a hermeneutic approach which is far from the long-lasting historiographic model of conflictual relationships between worshippers of various religious affiliations (mainly polytheists and Christians, occasionally Jews), but takes into account the competitive ambiance which was characteristic of Late Antiquity. In this afterword, I choose to address questions of definitions, heuristic tools, and methodological approaches as they emerge from the various cases studied. I start from historiography and avail-

able evidence for contextualizing the question. I then propose reflections on the impact on operating models (partition, cohabitation, sharing, succession) of the extensive definition of “religious sites” used by the editors. Finally I envision further documentary fields which might enhance the visibility of the dynamics of competitive sharing in Late Antiquity.

Robert M. Hayden, *Antagonistic Tolerance in the Late Antique Eastern Empire. The View from Rumelia*

Much of the Late Antique Eastern Empire is now known as the Balkans: Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia and Serbia, and parts of Turkey. To the Ottomans these lands were Rumelia, the lands of the Rum, or Romans, meaning Greek-speaking eastern Christians. If Late Antiquity refers to the displacement of Roman paganism by (forms of) Christianity, the arrival of (forms of) Islam beginning in the 7th century is relevant, since the patterns of interaction between early Muslims and the Christians and Jews in the places where Islam had just arrived presents a dynamic of competitive interaction in the development of religious spaces similar to those between Christians, Jews and pagans slightly before or contemporaneous with them. This chapter analyzes ways in which scholars working from literary source on that earlier period might gain insights from ethnographic and archaeological studies on competitive sharing in the region. The conceptual lenses of “antagonistic tolerance” reveals trajectories of similar intertemporal interactions of efforts to impose divinities from wider geopolitical/geo-religious spaces into localities in a region with many local figures of varying divinity.

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Schwabe Verlag's signet was Johannes Petri's printer's mark. His printing workshop was established in Basel in 1488 and was the origin of today's Schwabe Verlag. The signet refers back to the beginnings of the printing press, and originated in the entourage of Hans Holbein. It illustrates a verse of Jeremiah 23:29: 'Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?'

SHARED RELIGIOUS SITES IN LATE ANTIQUITY

The book aims at analyzing shared religious sites in the microcosm of the multireligious and multicultural Roman Empire during Late Antiquity. The main objective is to understand if some religious sites of the Eastern Roman Empire were the object of a shared attendance by groups or individuals from different religious backgrounds, and, for those which may have been, how and why this sharing happened. To facilitate comparison and to draw up models of occupancy dynamics, the contributions focus on a limited geographical and chronological area: the Eastern provinces from the 4th century onward, a turning-point in the Empire's religious transformations. This collective work offers a series of case-studies where polemical discourses are intersected not only with legal documents, but also with epigraphy, iconography, and archeology – including architecture and artefacts.

Francesco Massa is Assistant Professor of History of Religions at the Department of Historical Study of the University of Turin. From 2019 to 2023, he led a research project on "Religious Competition in Late Antiquity: A Laboratory of New Categories, Taxonomies and Methods" (ReLAB) at the University of Fribourg, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (2019–2023).

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