

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 Cyrhus, *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://csia.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E02065>; <http://csia.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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