Francesco Massa and Maureen Attali (Eds.)
Shared Religious Sites in Late Antiquity: Negotiating Cultural and Ritual Identities in the Eastern Roman Empire

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ARTHUR P. URBANO
aurbano@providence.edu
Providence College, Providence, RI 02918

This volume of essays is the outcome of the research project "Religious Competition in Late Antiquity" hosted by the University of Fribourg from 2019 to 2023. The goal of the project, in the words of the editors, was to "examine if, and if yes how, the dynamics of sharing were realized within the microcosm of the multireligious and multicultural Late Roman Empire" in the context of "multi-religious spaces" (10). The theoretical underpinning of the project and resulting essays is anthropologist Robert Hayden's model of "Antagonistic Tolerance" which he developed in studies of religious competition and shared religious sites in South Asia and the Balkans. The volume consists of an introductory Preface and nine essays. In the first essay, Attali and Massa ("Sharing Religious Sites in the Late Antique Roman Empire. Definition, Dynamics, Tentative Inventory") lay out key definitions and methodology. The following six essays are case studies focusing on specific late antique sites or topics, such as legal aspects of the question, conciliar canons, and the construction of imaginary (i.e. literary) sites. These are: Capucine Nemo-Pekelman, "'Law as a Weapon'. The Status of Temples, Heretic Churches, and Synagogues and the Legal Mechanisms for Their Confiscation and Reallocation to Catholic Churches (4th-5th c.)"; Mante Lenkaityte Ostermann, "The (Non-) Sharing of Religious Sites in the Greek Canonical Sources of the 4th Century"; Peter Talloen, "Competitive Sharing in Late Antique Asia Minor. Religious Sites or a Different Arena?"; Maria Chiara Giorda, "Sharing Monasteries. Mapping Late Antique Religious Competition in Alexandria"; 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?"; Gaetano Spampinato, "'Heretical Places' in Ancient Heresiology. Two Cases of 'Competitive Sharing' in the Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis?". An essay by Nicole Belayche ("Shared Religious Sites in Late Antiquity. An Afterword") provides a summary analysis of the full volume, which concludes appropriately with

an essay by Robert Hayden ("Antagonistic Tolerance in the Late Antique Eastern Empire. The View from Rumelia").

In a study such as this, definition of scope and terminology is critical. Attali and Massa do this with care in the Preface and first chapter. The authors opt for the terminology of "shared religious sites" as opposed to the theologically-oriented "shared holy spaces" or "sacred spaces / sites." Here "site" designates "a space delimited by borders that circumscribe where the sharing took place" (21). These sites can be real or fictionalized spaces, as the essays of Heyden and Spampinato show. In the absence of material evidence, competition at sites must be entirely imagined and constructed from literary accounts, as Giorda demonstrates with monasteries in Alexandria. Shared sites are "locations where religious acts were performed during the same time-period by individuals or groups who considered themselves as devotees of different 'religions'" (23). Because of the pervasive nature of religious practice in antiquity, the authors suggest that *any* place within a late antique city was a potential religious site. This is explored by Talloen who considers graffiti and symbols in civic spaces as evidence of religious competition, when "simultaneous sharing of religious sites *stricto sensu*…appears to be absent" in late antique Asia Minor (97).

Anthropologists and religion scholars have conceived of sharing as either peaceful or conflictual. The authors helpfully move away from overly simplified reconstructions and stress the necessity of considering the phenomena in broad geographical and chronological trajectories. "Religious competition" is understood as a dynamic process and as "an interaction between two or more religious identities that can be activated in specific moments for a political, social, or economic reasons" (10). This is expressed through a broad range of rituals and practices. Some key threads adopted from Hayden's "Antagonistic Tolerance" model are of note, especially the interplay between tolerance and dominance and the concepts of "religioscapes" (defined as "physical markers of the space in which practitioners of a given religious community interact" [11-12]) and "competitive sharing." The authors focus on examples of "active simultaneous sharing" in which people of different religious identities "simultaneously considered it a relevant religious space" (32). However, the phenomenon of conversion of sites (e.g., temples into churches) is also considered as a type of shared religious site. The editors include an inventory of sites that meet these criteria. Eight of nineteen, dating from the first through sixth centuries CE, were located in the provinces of Palaestina I and II.

The editors provide a well-defined set of categories for analysis, despite the challenges posed by such a task. However, I found these categories to be inconsistently applied in the subsequent essays. For example, after a well-argued case for using the specific term "religious sites," some essays use "site," "space," and "place" interchangeably and without distinction. Other essays, however, are very methodical on this point. A reader unfamiliar with the evidence will be surprised to learn that the archaeological record for the sharing and conversion of late antique religious sites is quite limited and often difficult to interpret, despite the many putative examples cited in early Christian texts. This is amplified in part by the geographical and chronological boundaries of the project. Therefore, it is difficult

for the essays to match the kind of specific trajectory of shared religious space that is found in the fascinating closing essay by Robert Hayden, which follows the development of a site in Ankara from a temple of Augustus and Roma, to a fifteenth-century Sufi shrine and mosque, to a secular historic site under the early Turkish Republic, and back to a (Muslim) religious site. Nonetheless this limited body of evidence is an important finding in itself as it challenges assumptions about the definition and interactions of religious groups in Late Antiquity. Apart from the groundbreaking work of Hayden, the volume does not engage with other religious competition projects that adopt somewhat different theoretical models, such as the interdisciplinary unit on Religious Competition in Late Antiquity of the Society of Biblical Literature (which has published two volumes [2014 and 2016]) or the research of Peter Van Nuffelen.

While most of the essays focus either on pagan-Christian or intra-Christian competition and religious sites, the readers of this journal might take note of several essays that deal with Jewish sites and practices (notably those by Nemo-Pekelman, Heyden, and Belayche). Attali and Massa briefly discuss several sites shared by pagans, Jews, and Christians, most notably Mamre. Absent, however, is discussion of Christian-Jewish interaction in the synagogues of Antioch, famously condemned by John Chrysostom.

This volume is commendable for confronting an elusive phenomenon with analytical rigor along with an awareness of the limitations of interpretation. The individual essays provide an array of modes of religious competition and types of religious sites that reveal the complexity of religious identities and interactions in Late Antiquity.