

## Book Reviews

**Naming the Sacred: Religious Toponymy in History, Theology and Politics.** Edited by ANNA MAMBELLI AND VALENTINA MARCHETTO. *Fscire Research and Papers 1*. Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2019. Pp. 230. €32.99 (eBook), ISBN 9783847009733; €40.00 (hard back), ISBN 9783847109730.

The significance of this volume extends far beyond the individual contributions within it. While *Naming the Sacred: Religious Toponymy in History, Theology and Politics* might be considered a volume of conference proceedings, its essays primarily address the need for a measured scholarly response to a divisive issue of public interest. The object of study is the status of the city of Jerusalem and the names of its sacred sites, and these essays represent measured responses by Religious Studies scholars, historians, legal scholars, and other academics in the humanities.

In the years leading up to summer 2016, UNESCO released a series of statements on Jerusalem and its sacred sites. Opposition to these “one-sided” statements arose both inside and outside UNESCO, especially where they preferred one sacred name and neglected others identifying the same site. In an attempt to nuance the statements that were produced without their consultation, scholars of UNESCO’s University Twinning and Networking program organized a conference as a response. The conference was “a clear case of academia seeking to make a sound statement based on historical and legal scholarship within a political context, in relation to a major international body” (10). The essays, therefore, present a wealth of rich historical, political, and theological context that serves to nuance the complex and multifaceted topic that is Jerusalem and its sacred sites. Naming and the sacrality ascribed to certain toponyms are key themes in several essays.

Alon Goshen-Gottstein outlines the task of the volume in his foreword, identifying the common thread running through all chapters as

the call for upholding a genuine interdisciplinarity, enhancing critical dialogue and scientific collaboration and advancing mutual knowledge of the other, as well as our rich common past, as an antidote to one-sided legal or political actions and as a response to the inadequacies of existing legal instruments and the ideology that informs them. (12)

The preface, by Paul Morris, contextualizes the conference and its rationale within the academic fields of Religious Studies and History as they shed light on the city of Jerusalem. In a helpful introduction to the academic study of religion, Morris turns to several theorists in Religious Studies in order to define sacred space.

Five essays appear under the heading “Cases.” Rita Lizzi Testa’s “Christian Empire and Pagan Temples in the Fourth Century CE” examines cases of the destruction, demolition, and looting of pagan temples by imperial provision. Though there was no universal model dictating this provision, economic factors likely kept revenue-generating pagan temples open far longer than previously believed. Merav Mack’s essay “Imagination, Memory and Fantasy” explores the cultural memories of Jerusalem and demonstrates how political difference dictating the preservation of certain histories—and the destruction of others—is a relatively recent phenomenon. Mack briefly explores the toponymy

of Jerusalem's gates, highlighting how their modern Arabic names preserve Hebrew and Aramaic ancestors. In "Destroying the Past: Monotheism, Iconoclasm and the Sacred," Silvia Ronchey considers the role of political iconoclasm as a motivating factor behind the destruction of sacred sites in recent and historical examples. The two remaining essays in this section are especially relevant to the study of toponyms.

On naming the place of the biblical Adam's burial, Nikolai Lipatov-Chicherin crafts a history of interpretation that extends from the earliest extant Jewish, Christian, and Islamic perspectives. A complex history emerges, as interpreters attribute a high level of importance to the biblical figure's burial site while identifying divergent locations: for Jews, Hebron and Jerusalem are named; for Christians, Adam's burial at Golgotha (an Aramaic toponym) helps prefigure the passion of Christ, yet Jerome's influence on the Latin tradition prefers Hebron; and for Muslims, it is Mecca and Jerusalem, or for Shi'a, Najaf. These multiple theories amongst the three Abrahamic traditions beget the veneration of multiple locations, effectively demonstrating the complexities surrounding what determines the sacredness of a specific place.

Roberto Regoli's "Rome and the *Questione Romana*" examines the religious toponymy of Rome as a case study on the evolving nature of naming in a city at the intersection of secular and religious significance. Exploring the modern and Risorgimento periods through the 21st century, Regoli argues that the changing odonyms of Rome represent a struggle for political power rather than anti-religious or anti-Catholic sentiment. After the Kingdom of Italy annexed Rome in 1871, there was a trend toward de-sacralization in naming practices. Some road and place names were changed to reflect "philo-Savoy" attitudes: *via delle Quattro Fontane* (named for the four fountains commissioned by Pope Sixtus V) became *via Savoia* (76). Other roads were renamed for artists, as *vicolo di San Giacomo* (flanking Basilica San Giacomo in Augusta) became *via Antonio Canova* (an Italian Neoclassical sculptor of the 17th-18th centuries) (77). Toponomastic considerations for new neighborhoods were also strictly secular during this time. Following the Roman reconciliation that marked the end of the *Questione Romana* on 11 February 1929, religious and papal names started to emerge amongst new Roman odonymy. Regoli's presentation of Roman street names demonstrates a fascinating framework that provides insight into the historical circumstances behind efforts to change specific sacred names.

Though the next two essays are grouped together under the heading "Theology," they are much more related to theo-political implications of Zionism. Saverio Campanini's "שאלו שלום ירושלים: Gershom Scholem from Zion to Jerusalem" explores Scholem's relationship with Jerusalem, which Campanini nuances far beyond the metaphors that typify popular understandings of Scholem. Robert Smith covers the impact of another variety of Zionism in the essay "Christian Zionism and Jerusalem Holy Places." After tracing the origins of Christian Zionist interpretation to the 17th century, Smith discusses its relationship to Christian colonialism and sacred sites in the city of Jerusalem. Smith argues that the Christian Zionist naming of sacred sites as specifically "Israeli" serves political and interreligious purposes that primarily benefit the Anglo-American Christians who hold them, often to the detriment of the religious other.

Three essays appear under the heading "Law," all three of which are concerned with the process of naming a specific site "sacred." Each approaches the difficult legal ramifications of what constitutes a sacred site and how that site can be protected. Readers of *Names* will appreciate the nuanced discussion of the qualifier "sacred."

W. Cole Durham Jr.'s "Non-Traditional Sacred Sites: The Need for Protection" outlines the need to preserve sites named sacred by religious traditions that emerge from the periphery of society. Durham explores non-traditional sacred sites and beliefs in order to highlight a core issue: the right or freedom to name a place "sacred." The dissolution of

the Jehovah's Witness tradition in Russia effectively illustrates the need to protect smaller-scale sites.

Peter Petkoff's essay, "Developing and Implementing Innovative Preventative Mechanisms for the Protection of Religious Heritage Sites Through Soft Law Approaches," expands on two earlier works covering the legal protection of sacred sites. Naming, to Petkoff, is a powerful and normative act in distinguishing boundaries between sacred and profane. The legal issues that surround preserving sacred sites are numerous and complex, and traditional approaches neglect the complexities inherent in this act of naming. The essay therefore "seeks to develop and implement innovative preventative mechanisms for the protection of religious heritage sites" (146). What follows are holistic approaches to international law and a series of prevention-based practices, all of which are defined as "legal tools" that can work to achieve this end.

Mario Ricca's essay "Ubiquitous Sacred Places: The Planetary Interplay of their Meaning and Legal Protection" concludes the section by recognizing the need to craft a common language for the discussion of sacred sites. Ricca avoids a single definition of the term "sacred" in this essay, as each religious tradition understands "sacred" differently. The task becomes one of translation that will allow adherents of a single tradition to understand how other traditions name their own places "sacred."

Alberto Melloni's postface, "A Chronology of the UNESCO Dispute on Jerusalem and Its Holy Places," aims to review how UNESCO sought to handle the process of naming sacred sites from 1980 until present day. Recent trends reveal an attempt to influence the naming of holy places within UNESCO, typically preferring a single name of significance to a single religious tradition while neglecting parallel names of significance to other religious traditions. Melloni meticulously reviews the history of naming sacred sites by tracing sacred nomenclature through UNESCO statements and reports released over the years. Following the postface, a Name Index contains personal names of authors cited as well as many of the personal names discussed in the volume itself. Toponyms, however, are not included in the index.

As a whole, this thought-provoking volume will certainly prove beneficial to onomasticians studying sacred toponyms and their cultural impact. Of the essays reviewed above, a few are more relevant to the study of names than others, but they all demonstrate the import of onomastics to the study of holy places. Aside from its focus on the academic study of names, the volume achieves its primary goal; it presents a measured scholarly response to a divisive issue of public interest, and the essays collectively reveal historical and religious precedents for the preservation of sacred sites and the many sacred names ascribed to them.

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**Of the Same Breath: Indigenous Animal and Place Names.** By LUCIE A. MÖLLER. Bloemfontein, South Africa: Sun Press, 2017. Pp. xiii + 365. (pbk R475) ISBN 978-1-928424-02-4; (e-book R380) ISBN 978-1-928424-03-1. Available from [www.sun-e-shop.co.za](http://www.sun-e-shop.co.za); electronic version is available on the African Sun Media App downloadable from Google Play Store/Apple iStore.

The onomastic team at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa, has made important contributions over the years to the study of names, primarily the place names of southern Africa. Lucie A. Möller, Peter E. Raper, L. Theodorus du Plessis, and Adrian Koopman, individually and together, have published books and articles on a variety of toponymic subjects, including the fourth edition of *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* (2014), reviewed in this journal in December 2019. The names of southern