

BEYOND SPACE LAW: THE CULTURAL ASPECTS OF LUNAR COLONIZATION. D. T. Richard^{1,2},
¹NASA Ames Research Center, MS 245-3 Moffett Field CA 94035-1000 and ²San José State University Research Foundation. (Denis.T.Richard@nasa.gov)

Introduction: The envisioned return to the Moon and the associated planning for human settlement creates a novel cultural and ethical paradigm. Far different from the philosophy of the Apollo era—of which summary exploration was the only outcome—current planning has to be seen as a tentative colonization that has no point of comparison in human history. No previous colonization effort has ever targeted an object of such universal importance in each and every human culture, and at the same time, no other expansion of Man's horizon has ever been so unequal in terms of access. For this reason, While the topic of the legality, or the political and economical motivations of such activities is being explored [1]-[3], this cultural aspect has been mainly occulted. We strongly advocate that the planning of future uses of the Moon as a platform for human activities be executed with the most careful and respectful consideration for international and multi-cultural sensibilities and ethical standards.

The Cultural Moon: The importance of Earth's satellite in virtually all cultures is undeniable. From the dawn of history to modern times, our story is intimately linked to that of our planet's companion. All cultures, whether pre-Columbian, European, African, or Asian, have myths and legends that in overwhelming majority describe the Moon as a life-giving or life-preserving



Figure 1: The Greek Moon-goddess Selene accompanied by the Dioscuri, or Phosphoros (the Morning Star) and Hesperos (the Evening Star). Marble altar, Roman artwork, 2nd century CE. From Italy. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

force. While western cultures have mainly ventured away from their poetic traditional foundations (Fig.1), Lunar themes resonated with their populations up until the turn of the 20th century (Fig.2).



Figure 2: Illustration for a scene from Méliès' feature movie "Le Voyage Dans La Lune" (1902)

Ethical Exploration and Settlement: Any attempt to build a settlement on the Moon will have to be respectfully planned to mitigate resentments that could arise from the perception of a minority taking possession of a universal body, at an international level—spacefaring vs. earthbound nations—and at national, social levels—use of a nation's resources for an uncertain common benefit. The utilization of Lunar resources and in particular any attempt to commercialize them—beyond services contracted by governments to enable exploration—should be carefully considered, as it is unlikely to be well received by a majority of the human community. Such commercialization would likely be regarded as benefiting a small minority while possibly desecrating a universal heritage. International collaboration has to be the main engine for this grand scheme in order to avoid the nationalistic tensions that are sure to arise if a unilateral—or uni-cultural—"conquest" of the Moon is launched. Beyond the legalities and the cost splitting that current space powers are discussing is a grander objective: a settlement of the Moon that—if not considered socially and culturally fair—will necessarily have to be regarded as acceptable by a majority of nations. With this objective in mind, it is of the utmost importance that any exploration plan be devised with cultural sensibilities in mind and in the framework of a wide international co-operation that includes non-spacefaring nations.

References: [1] Brearley A. (2006) *Astropolitics*, 4, 43. [2] Garretson P. (2008) *Astropolitics*, 6, 50. [3] Cremins T. and Spudis P. (2007) *Astropolitics*, 5, 87.