

ORBIS TERRARUM

Internationale Zeitschrift für historische Geographie der Alten Welt

Journal of Historical Geography of the Ancient World

Revue internationale de la géographie historique du monde antique

Rivista internazionale di geografia storica del mondo antico

22 (2024)

Franz Steiner Verlag

Das Emblem auf dem Cover der Zeitschrift ist abgeleitet von einem Relief in der Galleria Estense, Módena, Inv. Nr. 2627 (vgl. Vera Sauer, OT 1, 1995, 9–23).

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

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Maybachstraße 8, 70469 Stuttgart
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www.steiner-verlag.de

Druck: Beltz Grafische Betriebe, Bad Langensalza
Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Printed in Germany.

ISSN 1385-285X

ISBN 978-3-515-13880-2 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-515-13882-6 (E-Book)

DOI 10.25162/9783515138826

▷ KASPER, MICHAEL / ROLLINGER, ROBERT / RUDIGIER, ANDREAS / WIESEHÖFER, JOSEF (eds.), *Religion in den Bergen. Sakrale Orte, Heiligtümer, Performanz, Mythos und Alltagsleben*, Wien: Böhlau 2023. 704 p., 158 ill. ISBN: 978-3-205-21840-1. (*Montafoner Gipfeltreffen*, 5.)

As a theme for an academic conference, and the volume resulting from it, “religion” provided an interesting framework encouraging varied approaches to the relationships between mountain geography and cultures from all over the world and throughout history. The chapters collected in this volume exhibit considerable range in scope and method. While the majority focus on the geography of Europe or West Asia, a few entries extend the volume’s themes to regions beyond this core. Despite the integration of disparate elements into a unified printed volume, the diversity of topics makes it challenging to characterize the collection as a unified whole.

This volume presents the proceedings of the *Montafoner Gipfeltreffen* group’s meeting, which occurred from 19 to 21 October 2021. It is the fifth in the series. The production of a book of this magnitude within a two-year timeframe is a noteworthy accomplishment, even accounting for the considerable experience of the editorial team responsible for its creation. The contents of the volume encompass mountain cultures from a global array of regions, spanning from the earliest written history to the present. In addition to the brief introduction that provides summaries of the volume’s contents, the thirty-two chapters are loosely organized into five thematic groups: (1) holy mountains and sacred places; (2) mountain gods and high-altitude shrines; (3) mountains and religious performance; (4) mountains and myth; and (5) religion and living in the mountains. Nevertheless, apart from the dual central themes of the volume and the physical proximity of the collected scholarship in print form, there are few connecting elements that bring the individual contributions into clear conversation with each other or unite them into a coherent book.

The series’ primary geographical focus is the European Alps, with broader coverage of the Mediterranean world. Scholars engaged in the study of traditional European and classical historical traditions are likely to find material pertinent to their interests. However, the series also endeavors to encompass a broader geographical and cultural range, and this volume represents a notable advancement in that regard. This volume is dedicated to the late Iranian historian BERT FRAGNER. His contribution, completed by ROBERT ROLLINGER and FLORIAN SCHWARZ, explores political and religious discourse on mountains in eleventh-century Iran. This is one of several chapters devoted to the study of Islamic and Iranian subjects. The chapter by STEPHAN PROCHÁZKA investigates the role of mountains in medieval Islamic cosmology, positing that the concept of “holy mountain” appears to have minimal resonance in Muslim popular culture. In contrast, MARIA SIX-HOENBALKEN contributed a chapter on modern and contemporary Kurdish and Yazidi cultural practices, identifying holy mountains as one locus for myth-making within the cultural and religious complexity of West Asia’s sacred spaces. In his chapter, HILMAR KLINKOTT draws on classical Greek literature and Persian inscriptions to examine the evidence for religious reforms and practices in the early fourth century BC. TOURAJ DARYAEE, in turn, explores the symbolic role of

mountains in the imagination of Sassanian rulers, arguing that mountains as boundaries were a key thematic component in Shapur I's political self-representation. Furthermore, two chapters examine the influence of Iran on Greek and Roman culture. NINA MAZHJOO's analysis centers on the cult of Mithra, a religion that gained prominence within the Roman Empire during the early first millennium AD. She examines the hypothesis that the religion originated in Iran and, ultimately, argues that the cult of Mithra and its Persian aesthetics are better understood as part of Late Antique Roman society's internal discourse on Romanness. CHRISTOPH MICHELS presents two case studies of Greek and Iranian cultural fusion, Mount Zeus in the Pontos and Mount Nemrut near Commagene.

A number of other chapters broaden the geographical scope of the volume in interesting directions, and several address the legacy of European colonization from a range of perspectives. TILMAN FRASCH examines the role of mountains in the Theravada Buddhist tradition in South Asia, focusing on their use as ascetic retreats and pilgrimage destinations. FRIEDRICH PÖHL provides an overview of the cultural history of the Black Hills in South Dakota. He contextualizes ongoing disputes over the region within the broader framework of 19th and 20th century American colonization and enduring heritage issues faced by multiple First Nation peoples of the Great Planes. In their chapter, SONJA JOHN, TIGIST GIRMA WAKENIE, RAHWA YOUSSEF, and ADERA GETANEH ADERA introduce the religious complex at Mount Qusquram, situated near Gondar in northern Ethiopia. Founded in the 18th century, today this site complex comprises an active church, museum, and educational center. By way of the biblical Book of Henoch, the authors set forth a comparison between the living cultural tradition of reading and teaching Ge'ez Christian literature as it is practiced at Qusquram and the manuscripts held in European museum collections. These latter manuscripts are regarded as curiosities with limited meaning to their current owners and as a legacy of European colonization and expropriation of cultural artifacts. DORIS KURELLA examines the pre-Christian beliefs, cosmology, and rituals of the Mapuche peoples of Chile and Argentina. She traces a process of re-traditionalization that has been ongoing since the third quarter of the 20th century, whereby Mapuche communities have sought to differentiate themselves from the rest of Chilean society and reverse the assimilation efforts of the previous century.

It should be noted, however, that the chapters listed above comprise only approximately one-third of the total volume. As was the case for previous volumes, the majority of the content, comprising twenty-one chapters, explores familiar geography and topics for Western historians. SEBASTIAN FINK examines the role of mountains in the earliest Mesopotamian myths from the third millennium BC, focusing on the figure of Sumerian King Lugalbanda. ORELL WITTHUHN dissects of the concept of "mountain" within the unique geographical context of Egyptian culture in the second millennium BC. HERBERT NIEHR employs a *longue durée* approach to examine the specific geography of Jebel Aqra, situated on the border between Syria and Turkey. Likewise, SIMONE PAGANINI investigates Mount Zion in Jerusalem, while MIRJO SALVINI analyzes Mount Ararat during the Neo-Assyrian period. Also following the *longue durée* approach, HUBERT STEINER presents

evidence for religious performance drawn from archaeological finds of burnt offerings in the South Tyrol spanning from the Urnfield culture to the Roman era. OLIVER JENS SCHMITT compares holy mountains across a range of religious and cultural traditions in the Balkans from the foundation of Mount Athos in the 10th century AD to the present.

In chapters examining the ancient Greek world, PETER FUNKE discusses the function and significance of prayer tablets from the sanctuary at Dodona. ACHIM LICHTENBERGER provides an analysis of the art history and archaeology of Mount Olympos. Meanwhile, JULIAN DEGEN presents a summary of the literary evidence for Macedonian religion prior to the reigns of Phillip and Alexander. In their chapter, THOMAS DAUTH, ERICH KISTLER, GERHARD FORSTENPOINTNER, and URSULA THANHEISER present a compelling argument based on a well-structured body of evidence that a deer cult practiced near Mount Iato in fifth-century BC Sicily served as a marker of local identity. KRZYSZTOF NAWOTKA and PIOTR GŁOGOWSKI investigate the cult of Adonis and Mount Lebanon. PAULINA KACZMARCZYK probes a Late Antique literary account of Hellenistic-era foundation rituals in northern Syria. JOHANNES HAHN reconstructs the process of Christianization of holy mountains in Roman Syria. KAI RUFFING examines the cult of Jupiter Poeninus at the Great St Bernard Pass, while ALOIS NIEDERSTÄTTER provides a comprehensive survey of the medieval and Early Modern churches and monasteries in Vorarlberg, western Austria. In chapters devoted to the Early Modern Alps, FLORIAN HITZ addresses the Reformation in Prättigau, Switzerland; HAROLD KOFLER examines 16th-century Anabaptists in Sterzing, South Tyrol; EDITH HESSENBERGER analyzes 18th-century miracle tales; and MANFRED TSCHAIKNER explores the last witchcraft trials. Finally, JOHN MATHIEU contributes a chapter on the summit crosses erected across Italy to commemorate the year 1900.

The readability of the contributions is markedly variable, and many chapters lack essential structural guideposts, illustrations, and even basic maps to orient a reader, necessitating frequent online searches just to read the book as it is presented. This is an unusual editorial choice given the geographical and temporal breadth and range of topics covered in the volume, suggesting a lack of consideration for who the intended audience even is.

The volume contains two indices, one of personal names and another of locations. However, both indices exhibit formatting inconsistencies. For example, commas are not employed to differentiate between family-name-first and personal-name-first format. As an example, the index lists “Murena L. Licinius” but also “Septimius Severus” and “Piri Reis.” In many cases, a single name is given without any indication as to which of several historical figures it may be referring to. Examples include “Nikolaus,” “Symeon Stylites,” and “Napoleon.” The index’s exclusive focus on personal and geographical names hinders readers’ ability to identify overarching themes uniting the collected chapters. This impedes the coherence of the volume’s scholarly efforts. The reader is left with the impression that the intention is for the chapters to be made available primarily as standalone digital documents, with the search function substituting for the print index.

The current volume goes up to page 713, which is nearly two hundred pages longer than the previous entry in the series.¹ The layout choices, particularly the inclusion of numerous black-and-white plates in many chapters, are conducive to a physical format and enhance the reading experience. However, the printed book is unwieldy to use, weighing 1.3kg. Between the physical bulk and the lack of internal synergies linking the diverse individual contributions, the printed edition feels superfluous. Why were the contents published as a book rather than in a journal format? The volume adds up to exactly the sum of its parts, no less, but certainly no more either.

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▷ LUTHER, SUSANNE / HARTOG, PIETER B. / WILDE, CLARE E. (eds.), *Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Travel Experiences. 3rd century BCE – 8th century CE*, Berlin: De Gruyter 2023. vii + 356 p. ISBN: 978-3-11-071741-9. (*Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – Tension, Transmission, Transformation*, 16.)

The collection of papers, edited by SUSANNE LUTHER, PIETER B. HARTOG and CLARE E. WILDE, is a new contribution to the field of studies covering history of travelling in the premodern world. The volume is a valuable addition to the study of travelling, as well as history of Judaism, early Christianity, and early Islam in general.

The theme behind the volume is tied together in an introductory chapter by the editors. While the volume steps out from the traditional scope of religious travelling, such as pilgrimage, religion nevertheless creates the framework inside which the papers operate. The main focus is on the role of travel in three monotheistic traditions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The inclusion of Islam is one of the strengths of the overall volume, as travel in the world of early Islam is still very much ignored in premodern studies, particularly from a comparative point of view, as rightly expressed in the introductory chapter of the volume. That said, papers dealing with the Islamic world form very small part of the volume, only two out of fifteen articles cover the subject. Nevertheless, their inclusion is much welcomed because of the relative scarcity of papers available on the subject, as well as because of their very good quality, particularly as they also provide a good introduction to those not familiar with the subject.

Besides widening the view by bringing early Islam into the picture, the volume also emphasizes the experience of travelling as the focus of the book, instead of a more traditional approach dealing more with themes such as practicalities and materiality of travel. The scope is wide indeed, as it includes not just ordinary, but even otherworldly travels, travelers themselves remaining in their geographical space. These papers include contributions by NILS NEUMANN, BENJAMIN LENSINK and the one co-written by THEO WITKAMP and JAN KRANS. All these three articles are very interesting and well-written; I was particularly fascinated by NEUMANN's

1 See the review by S. BALATTI, *OT* 20, 2022, 285–288.