

Abstract

Current Controversies Concerning Access to Shared Holy Sites: A comparison of Jerusalem and Cordoba

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Recent tensions over the question of non-Muslim prayer on the Haram al-Sharif and al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem have significantly exacerbated the political divisions between Israelis and Palestinians over the future governance of the city. Tensions in the Mezquita-Cathedral in Cordoba over the prospect of a precedent being established for Muslim prayers being carried out in the site are not of the same magnitude or political importance but, nevertheless, point to some parallels and patterns over the control over access and eligibility to holy sites. This paper examines the extent to which those sites whose ownership and use have changed over time (“temporal supersession”) constitute a discrete sub-category of shared sacred sites and whether the dynamics of centrality and exclusion (Hassner) and antagonistic tolerance (Hayden) apply to them to the same degree. The paper suggests that the broader political, demographic and urban development context of the cities themselves play a significant role in introducing new dynamics and alterations to the balance of power into the arrangements concerning access to these sites.

Short Profile

Michael Dumper is Professor in Middle East Politics, University of Exeter. He is author of *The Politics of Jerusalem since 1967* (1997), *The Politics of Sacred Space: The Old City of Jerusalem in the Middle East Conflict*, (2002) *The Future of the Palestinian Refugees: Towards Equity and Peace* (2007); editor of *Palestinian Refugee Repatriation: Global Perspectives* (2006) and joint editor of *International Law and the Israel-Palestinian Conflict* (2010) His most recent book (2014) is *Jerusalem Unbound: History, Geography and the future of the Holy City*. Professor Dumper is currently holder of a 3 –year Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship comparing religious conflicts in cities. For further details see: <http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/politics/research/projects/powerpietyandpeople>