

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in New Religious Movements

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## MAKING PLACES SACRED

*New Articulations of Place  
and Power*

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## Making Places Sacred

### New Articulations of Place and Power

Elements in New Religious Movements

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**Abstract:** Although claims to sacredness are often linked to the power of a distant past, the work of making places sacred is creative, novel, renewable, and reversible. This Element highlights how sacred space is newly made. It is often associated with blood, death, and geographic anomalies, yet no single feature determines sacred associations. People make space sacred by connecting with “extrahuman” figures – the ancestors, spirits, and gods that people attempt to interact with in every society. These connections can be concentrated in people’s bodies, yet bodies are particularly vulnerable to loss. The Element also examines the multidimensional and multisensory dimensions of sacred space, which can be made almost anywhere, including online, but can also be unmade. Unmaking sacred space can entail new sacralization. New and minority religions in particular provide excellent sites for studying sacredness as a value, raising the reliably productive question: sacred for whom?

This Element also has a video abstract: [Cambridge.org/ENRM\\_Tomlinson](https://www.cambridge.org/ENRM_Tomlinson)

**Keywords:** sacred places, sacred space, new religious movements, ritual, spirituality

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Contents

Introduction	1
1 Sacred for Whom?	2
2 Blood and Death Make Places Sacred	10
3 Natural Features and the Sacred	14
4 Performing the Sacred	18
5 The Body – the Most Vulnerable Sacred Site	27
6 Sacred Space Is Multidimensional	32
7 Sacred Space Is Multisensory	37
8 Sacred Space Can Be Unmade	42
9 Sacred Space Reaffirms the Human	46
Conclusion	51
References	53