

RITUAL SITES AND RELIGIOUS RIVALRIES IN LATE ROMAN NORTH AFRICA

In *Ritual Sites and Religious Rivalries in Late Roman North Africa*, Lander examines the rhetorical and physical battles for sacred space between practitioners of traditional Roman religion, Christians, and Jews of late Roman North Africa. By analyzing literary along with archaeological evidence, Lander provides a new understanding of ancient notions of ritual space. This regard for ritual sites above other locations rendered the act or mere suggestion of seizing and destroying them powerful weapons in inter-group religious conflicts. Lander demonstrates that the quantity and harshness of discursive and physical attacks on ritual spaces directly correlates to their symbolic value. This heightened valuation reached such a level that rivals were willing to violate conventional Roman norms of property rights to display spatial control. Moreover, Roman Imperial policy eventually appropriated spatial triumphalism as a strategy for negotiating religious conflicts, giving rise to a new form of spatial colonialism that was explicitly religious.

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Shira L. Lander
Frontmatter
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NORTH AFRICA



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*To my loved ones, teachers, and colleagues
for their support, guidance, and inspiration*



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PREFACE

This project originated in the course of writing my dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania under the direction of Ross S. Kraemer, Robert A. Kraft, Brent D. Shaw, and E. Ann Matter. While examining the role of martyr veneration rituals in reconfiguring social arrangements of late antique North Africa, time and again the importance of ritual sites surfaced. That project afforded neither the time nor space that this significant issue demanded, and I embarked on a study that took me deeper into the fields of archaeology and cultural geography. Throughout the decade that I was researching ancient conflicts over religious sites, the world repeatedly witnessed attacks on religious buildings and monuments around the globe. Most recently the temple of Baalshamin in Palmyra and its chief of antiquities, Khaled el-Asaad, were annihilated by ISIS militants under the guise of religious precepts. The persistence of spatial contestation as a strategy for negotiating power provoked questions about the significance of space and place in the human imagination, questions that I address in this book.

Along the way I have been fortunate to share these questions with wonderful colleagues who have provided opportunities for fruitful dialogue and critique. Many of the methodological issues I wrestle with emerged from a 2004 panel of what was at that time known as the *Europe and the Mediterranean in Late Antiquity Group* of the American Academy of Religion. I delivered a paper entitled “‘The Word Made Flesh’: Case Studies of Confluence and Conflict in the Shrines of the Terebinths of Mamre and the Maccabean Martyrs in Daphne, Syria.” One of my fellow panelists, Georgia Frank, was working on similar issues, and our respondent, Patricia Cox Miller, challenged us to consider how the “material turn” influenced our work. Frank went on to publish numerous articles exploring the relationship between sacred objects and memory, and Miller published her analysis of the “thingness” of saints’ bodies in *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (2009). One of the participants, Christine Shepardson, asked me to think further about

issues posed by cultural geographers, and informed me that she, too, was studying spatial contestation in Antioch. At that point my research was not geographically specific, yet the value of such a project became clear to me in my ongoing encounters with Shepardson's work and I focused my research on North Africa.

Brent Shaw then published his monumental study of North African conflict, *Sacred Violence. African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (2011). His richly delineated history of North African violence in the post-Constantinian century reframed and expanded much of what I had learned from him as his doctoral student, and confirmed the usefulness of this type of regionally focused study. In order to deepen current understanding of the North African conflicts and to shed light on the strategy of spatial contestation more broadly, I chose to examine the material dimension of those battles.

Many people have made this book possible. My loving and nurturing family and friends have given me the wherewithal and humor required to stay the course. My wise and erudite teachers, most exceptionally Ross Kraemer, have simultaneously supported and challenged my work. Along the way, various versions of this project have received helpful suggestions and critique from my wonderful colleagues at Rice and Southern Methodist Universities, the *Europe and the Mediterranean in Late Antiquity Group* of the American Academy of Religion, and the *Religious World of Late Antiquity* and *Violence and Representations of Violence among Jews and Christians* sections of the Society of Biblical Literature. I am grateful to Ross Kraemer, Christine Shepardson, and the anonymous other readers for their careful perusal of the manuscript.

ABBREVIATIONS

Note: Abbreviations follow *The SBL Handbook of Style* unless otherwise noted below. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

<i>Act. pur. Fel.</i>	<i>Acta purgationis Felicis episcopi Autrumnitani</i> , ed. C. Ziwsa, CSEL 26 (Vienna, 1893), pp. 197–204 = Optatus, Appendix 2 to <i>de schism. Don.</i>
<i>Act. Mun. Fel.</i>	<i>Acta Munati Felicis</i> in the <i>Gesta apud Zenophilum</i>
<i>Conc. Gall.</i>	<i>Concilia Galliae a. 314–506</i> , ed. C. Munier, CCL 148 (Turnhout, 1963), pp. 9–24
<i>Conc. ep. Arel.</i>	<i>Concilium episcoporum Arelatense ad Silvestrum papam</i> , ed. C. Ziwsa, CSEL 26 (Vienna, 1893), pp. 206–208 = Optatus, Appendix 4 to <i>de schism. Don.</i>
CJZC	<i>Corpus Jüdischer Zeugnisse Aus Der Cyrenika</i> . Tubinger Atlas Des Vorderen Orients. Ed. Gert Lüderitz, with an introduction by Joyce M. Reynolds. Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1983.
<i>de schism. Don.</i>	Optatus, <i>de schismate Donatistarum</i> , <i>Optat de Milève: Traité contre les Donatistes</i> 1: Livres I et II, ed. M. Labrousse, SC 412 (Paris, 1995) and <i>Optat de Milève: Traité contre les Donatistes</i> 2: Livres III à VII, ed. M. Labrousse, SC 413 (Paris, 1996). ¹

¹ Most editions use the title *de schismate Donatistarum*, yet Mandouze preferred *contra Parmenianum Donatistam* (“Optatus,” PCA 1: 795–7). Paul Monceaux noted that neither title was preserved in ancient manuscripts; the Codex Remensis has *ad Parmenianum schismaticorum auctorem*. See Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l’Afrique Chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu’à l’invasion arabe*, 7 vols. (Brussels: Impression Anastaltique. Culture et Civilisation, 1901–23; 1966) 5: 248. I will use the conventional *de schism. Don.*

- Ep. Const. Aelaf.* *Epistula Constantini Aelafio*, ed. C. Ziwsa, CSEL 26 (Vienna, 1893), pp. 204–206 = Optatus, Appendix 3 to *de schism. Don.*
- Ep. Const. Cels.* *Epistula Constantini Celso*, ed. C. Ziwsa, CSEL 26 (Vienna, 1893), pp. 211–212 = Optatus, Appendix 7 to *de schism. Don.*
- Ep. Const. episc. cath.* *Epistula Constantini episcopis catholicis*, ed. C. Ziwsa, CSEL 26 (Vienna, 1893), pp. 208–210 = Optatus, Appendix 5 to *de schism. Don.*
- Ep. Const. episc.* *Epistula Constantini episcopis*, ed. C. Ziwsa, CSEL 26 (Vienna, 1893), pp. 210–211 = Optatus, Appendix 6 to *de schism. Don.*
- Ep. Const. episc. Afric.* *Epistula Constantini universis episcopis per Africam*, ed. C. Ziwsa, CSEL 26 (Vienna, 1893), pp. 212–213 = Optatus, Appendix 9 to *de schism. Don.*
- Ep. Const. Zeu.* *Epistula Constantini Zeuzio, Gallico, Victorino et. al.*, ed. C. Ziwsa, CSEL 26 (Vienna, 1893), pp. 213–216 = Optatus, Appendix 10 to *de schism. Don.*
- Gest. Zeno.* *Gesta apud Zenophilum*, ed. C. Ziwsa, CSEL 26 (Vienna, 1893), pp. 185–197 = Optatus, Appendix 1 to *de schism. Don.*
- JIGRE *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt*. ed. William Horbury and David Noy. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- MiAg *Miscellanea Agostiniana*. Vol. 1. *Sermones post Maurinos reperti*. ed. G. Morin. Rome: Tipografia Poliglota Vaticana, 1930.
- Pass. Dat. Saturn.* *Passio ss. Dativi, Saturnini presb. et aliorum (Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs)*, P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, “La Passio dei martiri Abitinensi,” in *Note agiografiche* 8 = *Studi e Testi* 65 (Città del Vaticano, 1935): 3–71.
- PCA *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire. Études d'antiquités africaines*. ed. Henri Irénée Marrou and Jean-Rémy Palanque. Vol. 1. “Afrique.” ed. André Mandouze. Paris: CNRS Editions, 1982.

ABBREVIATIONS

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- PLRE *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire.*
Vol. 1. ed. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and
J. Morris. Vol. 2. ed. J. R. Martindale. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1980. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- PLS *Patrologiae cursus completus. series Latina. Supplementum.*
ed. A. Hamman. Paris: Garnier, 1958–1974.