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How to Share a Sacred Place – The Parallel Christian and Muslim Use of the Major Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem

As a memorial that is claimed by two world religions with competing traditions, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem today is a prime example of a site of confessional conflict. It is, however, the turbulent history of several other locations in Jerusalem considered by different religions or confessions to be holy sites which provides examples of spaces used for inter-religious and multi-religious purposes. Some of these sites are considered sacred by two religions, a few even by members of all three local faiths, Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The Israeli historian Ora Limor has already discussed important aspects of this topic in her paper »Sharing Sacred Space: Holy Places in Jerusalem between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam« published in 2007[1]. Her research focused on tombs of holy persons that were – or still are – venerated by members of more than one religion, David's Tomb on Mount Zion being a prominent example[2].

In this paper another phenomenon shall be discussed: the use of memorials of Christian salvation in Jerusalem and Bethlehem by both Christians and Muslims from the Muslim conquest of the region in the 630s through the Middle Ages[3]. Some later references in Ottoman sources will also be mentioned. It will be shown how a common use of these places by Christians and Muslims was established, by whom and by what means these »arrangements« were attempted through architecture, media and ritual.

At first glance, it might seem astonishing that Christians and Muslims set up places of worship within the same buildings. However, in an essay published in 1991 in the journal »The Muslim World«, Suliman Bashear showed that during the first and early second centuries after the rise of Islam Muslims praying in churches was a common practice[4]. For example, the handover agreements of settlements frequently contained the regulation that a quarter or half of an existing church had to be assigned to the Muslim conquerors as a place of worship[5]. This indicates that in some areas mosques were established within existing churches, while the Christian community still used the same building[6]. Recently, Mattia Guidetti has shown that the newly-installed Muslim places of worship were mainly located in adjacent parts within the wider building precinct, such as in courtyards or baptisteries, and not within the main Christian church building itself[7].

But how can one imagine such a shared use of one building complex? According to a tradition from the first half of the tenth century, an early Islamic legal scholar named Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ǧaʿfar ibn Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣādiq (born 699/700 or 702/703 in Medina; died 765) allowed Muslim prayer in churches. On the question of how a Muslim should behave when non-Muslims made use of the same place, he answered that one should turn towards the qibla wall and ignore them[8]. Only after separate mosques had been built for the Muslim population, or existing buildings had been entirely converted into Muslim places of worship, can it be suggested that this practice declined.

Places where Christians had commemorated the life and Passion of Jesus and Mary held a special position for both Muslims and Christians, as in the Qurʾān the Prophet ʿĪsā and his virgin mother Maryam play an important role as well[9]. As Bashear pointed out, according to early Muslim traditions

1 Limor, Sharing. Meri, Cult discusses examples of shared rituals in tombs of local saints in Syria; Berger, Veneration discusses tombs venerated by Jews and Muslims in Palestine. Basic analysis of different types of sharing the holy: Kedar, Convergences; Weltecke, Loca Sancta.

2 Limor, Sharing 224-226. On the practice of Muslim veneration of local Christian saints see also: Key Fowden, The Barbarian Plain; Key Fowden, Sharing Holy Places; Weltecke, Loca Sancta; Irwin, Palestine. On the modern situation see e. g.: Bowman, Nationalizing the Sacred. For general approaches to multi-faith sites from a cultural history perspective see: Albera, Mixing; Albera/Baskar, Religions; Albera/Couroucli, Sharing; Albera/Marquette/Penicaud, Lieux saints partagés; Beinhauer-Köhler, al-Aqsa; Beinhauer-Köhler/Schwarz-Boenneke/Roth, Viele Religionen; Bowman, Sharing; Choulia, Holy Places; Couroucli, Shared Sacred Spaces; Hamilton, Saidnaya; Holmes, Shared Worlds; Kedar, Convergences; Kofsky/Stroumsa, Sharing; Mersch, Churches; Olympios, Shared Devotions; Verstegen, Multireligiöse Gebetsräume; Verstegen, Normalität oder Ausnahmesituation; Verstegen, Trennung.

3 A shorter version of this article has been published in German in: Verstegen, Geteiltes Gedenken. Some of these places are mentioned by Elad, Medieval

Jerusalem; Peri, Christianity; Verstegen, Multireligiöse Gebetsräume; Verstegen, Normalität oder Ausnahmesituation. On St Mary's tomb: Arce, Cult.

4 Bashear, Qibla. See also Tritton, Caliphs 39 f. (sources); Elad, Medieval Jerusalem 138.

5 Busse, ʿUmar-Moschee 80. For the general study of these contracts: Noth, Verträge 282-314; Cohen, Pact of ʿUmar; Noth, Problems of Differentiation. See also comments in Guidetti, Contiguity 231 with n. 8; 252-255.

6 Busse, ʿUmar-Moschee 74. Examples were the bishop's cathedral of Damascus and the Church of St. Sergius at Resafa (both Syria), where Muslim places of prayer were established in the courtyards.

7 Guidetti, Byzantine Heritage; Guidetti, Contiguity.

8 Bashear, Qibla 280 (with reference to a tradition that goes back to first half of tenth c.). Commentaries on how to behave when a Muslim was confronted by a Christian in a place of worship usually refer to Sura 17,85: »Say: ›Every man works according to his own manner; but your Lord knows very well what man is best guided as to the way‹«. (Surat al-ʾIsrāʾ/The night journey).

9 Mourad, Stories; Mourad, Mary in the Qurʾān; Mourad, Jesus in the Qurʾan; Abboud, Mary in the Qurʾan.
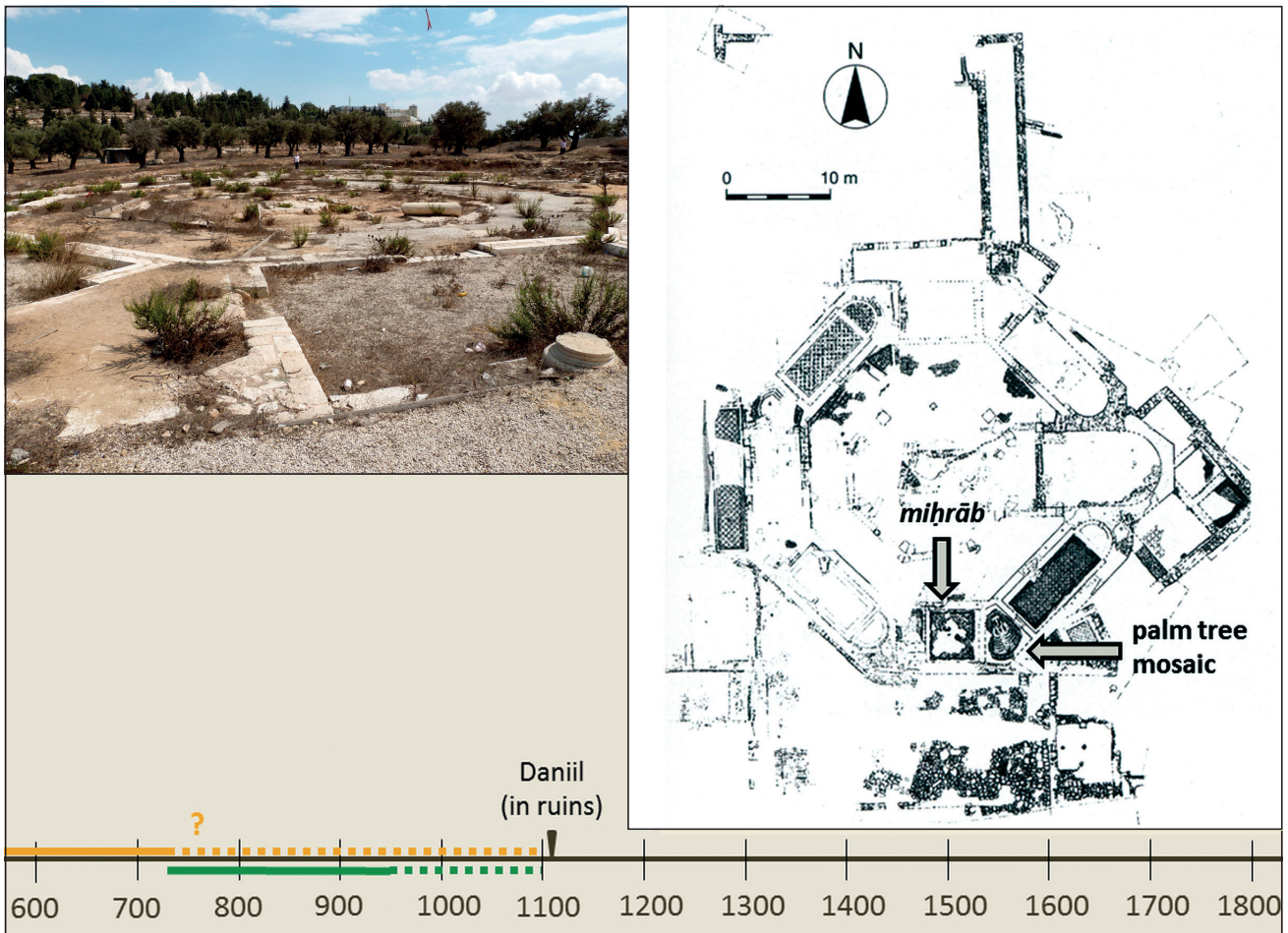
Fig. 1 Jerusalem, road to Bethlehem. Church of the Kathisma. Ground plan (Avner) and view. – (Plate Verstegen, 2015; Plan Avner, Recovery of the Kathisma fig. 13. Photo Seetheholyland.net, 2018, Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA-2.0).

in some cases even Mohammed himself, his entourage and successors were said to have visited these memorial sites and to have prayed there[10]. In the following, some examples of how Christians and Muslims arranged solutions for their clashing interests of owning and visiting these holy places will be presented.

Church of the Kathisma

The earliest known example of a transformation of a Christian sacred place into a Muslim place of worship is the Church of the Kathisma situated at the third mile along the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem[11]. This building was excavated between 1993 and 2000 by the Israel Antiquities Authority under the direction of Rina Avner[12]. The excavations uncovered the lower parts of the walls of an octagonal central building

that incorporated a flat rock in its centre (**fig. 1**). A ring of columns or pillars surrounded the central space and separated it from an ambulatory. From there doors gave access to a ring of surrounding rooms in which four larger chapel-like spaces and some smaller rectangular and interstitial spaces were located. The entrances to the building were originally situated in the west, north, and south, while towards the east an apse projected out of the octagon[13].

Historical sources give a wide range of information about this building. For example, around 520 the author of the *vita* of the monk Theodosios tells us that a rich noblewoman named Ikelia financed the building of a church and an adjoining monastery of the so-called »Old Kathisma« in the time of Juvenal, who was bishop of Jerusalem from about 422 to 458[14]. Based on this historical text and on archaeological sources, the dating of the original construction of the church ranges from 431-439 to 450-458[15]. The text also states that

10 Bashear, Qibla 273-277.
11 See also Verstegen, Trennung; Guidetti, Contiguity 250 f.
12 Rina Avner has published a number of articles on the church, see e. g.: Avner, Mar Elias; Avner, Recovery of the Kathisma; Avner, Kathisma; Avner, Initial Tradition; Avner, Dome of the Rock. See also Shoemaker, Traditions 81-98; Shalev-Hurvitz, Holy Sites Encircled 117-141. Rina Avner's PhD thesis on the Kathisma church (Hebrew University at Jerusalem, 2004) is still unpublished.

13 Shalev-Hurvitz, Holy Sites Encircled 117-141. The author argues that initially the church of the Kathisma was constructed without an apse, which might have been added in the 6th c.
14 Theodorus Petraeus, Vita Sancti Theodosii 12,4-14,4 (ed. Usener 13 f.); Kyrillos von Skythopolis, Vita Theodosii 236 f.
15 Avner, Mar Elias 139; Shalev-Hurvitz, Holy Sites Encircled 120; 146-156.

the church was dedicated to Mary the Theotokos and had been built halfway from Jerusalem to Bethlehem at the place of Mary's rest (the meaning of the Greek word *kathisma* is »seat«). A resting place of Mary on the way to Bethlehem had already been mentioned in the apocryphal *Infancy Gospel of James* in the middle of the second century[16], so that a local tradition of this place related to the rock might have existed before the church was built[17]. Around 570 the Piacenza pilgrim tells us that meanwhile a water basin had been installed around the rock that was filled by a spring from which Mary was said to have drunk during her rest on the flight to Egypt[18]. This basin might be identified with the remains of a complete remodelling of the central part of the octagon in a second phase, which, according to the archaeological results, took place in the sixth century[19]. It was not until 1107/1108 in the report of the Russian pilgrim Abbot Daniel that this building was mentioned again. The traveller described the ruins of a beautiful church, which at that time apparently was no longer in use[20]. The written sources do not provide any information about what had happened to the building in the meantime.

Therefore, it is even more surprising that the recent excavations discovered a third construction phase in the first half of the eighth century, in which the building was adapted to the requirements of a Muslim place of worship[21]. For this purpose, the southern door was bricked up and replaced by a *miḥrāb* niche[22]. The building was partially provided with new floor mosaics. The apse was dismantled, and an L-shaped annex oriented to the southeast was erected there instead. In one of its rooms a lavish mosaic with pearl medallions was laid out on the floor. These changes indicate that the building was not used as a church anymore (at least not primarily), and that the prayer direction in the eastern part may have been changed to the southeast, while in the central space the *miḥrāb* pointed southwards[23].

Apparently, the building still retained its former role as a place of worship for Mary, connected with the notion of Mary in Sura 19, verses 22-25, which describe the events in the context of the virginal conception and the birth of Jesus:

»So she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a distant place. And the birth pangs surprised her by the trunk of the palm-tree. She said, ›Would I had died ere this, and become a thing forgotten!‹ But the one that was below her called to her, ›Nay, do not sorrow; see, thy Lord has set below

thee a rivulet. Shake also to thee the palm-trunk, and there shall come tumbling upon thee dates fresh and ripe‹«.

The connection between the place and this passage in the Qurʾān was reflected by the iconographic program of the newly-designed mosaic floor: in one of the southern interstitial spaces a mosaic pavement showed a large, fruit-bearing date palm, which was flanked by two little trees[24].

It cannot be determined conclusively whether later the building was attended by Muslims only. Maybe the outer ring of chapel-like rooms could have been used by non-Muslims as places of prayer, so that Muslims and Christians might both have visited the place[25]. In the eighth or ninth century a mosaic inscription bearing a cross symbol was laid out in one of the outer rooms[26]. This detail supports the assumption of an enduring Christian presence in the Kathisma building[27]. It is furthermore an interesting fact that the motives of the bowing palm tree and the refreshing waters were also present or taken over in Christian tradition in a slightly altered way in the apocryphal »Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew«, written between the middle of the sixth and the end of the eighth century[28].

One explanation why the Kathisma church underwent one of the earliest Muslim adoptions of a Christian holy site might be the fact that the building had already lost its former importance in the Christian liturgical calendar before the Muslim conquest of the region. Around 600, a new church for the Mother of God had been erected over her venerated tomb in the Kidron valley, commissioned by the Byzantine emperor Maurice (r. 582-602)[29]. Later, one of the most important liturgical Marian traditions celebrated on the 15th of August that had formerly been commemorated in the church of the Kathisma, was taken over by the new church of St Mary, and only the dedication feast of the Kathisma church was still celebrated there two days earlier[30]. There are no sources testifying exactly how long the latter tradition was practised or when the building started to fall into ruins.

Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem

The worship of Mary in the former Church of the Kathisma might have come to an end in the first half of the tenth century at the latest. For it was at this time that Muslim pilgrims started venerating the remains of a palm tree that was said to have served as a resting place for Mary on her way to Beth-

16 Gospel of James 17,3. See Apokryphen 427.
17 This corresponds to the reference of a feast of Mary, celebrated in August, in the liturgical calendars of Jerusalem, e. g. in the Armenian lectionary (compiled before 442), and in the Georgian lectionary. Cf. Renoux, Codex 354-357; Garitte, Calendrier 301.
18 Antonini Placentini Itinerarium 28 (CCSL 175, 143).
19 Shalev-Hurvitz, Holy Sites Encircled 120; 123-126.
20 Leskien, Pilgerfahrt 39.
21 Avner, Recovery of the Kathisma 180. The date is based on coins finds, which give a *terminus post quem* 715-730, under the mosaics belonging to this third phase.
22 Avner, Recovery of the Kathisma 180 fig. 13; Guidetti, Contiguity 251 fig. 13.

23 I am grateful to Rina Avner for this information and interpretation of the archaeological record. Perhaps the room was set up as the »eastern place« where Mary drew aside from her family, according to Sura Maryam 19, verses 16 f.
24 An iconographic parallel can be found in the Umayyad mosaics of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. See Avner, Recovery of the Kathisma 182.
25 Avner, Recovery of the Kathisma 182.
26 Cotton et al., Corpus II 531 f. App. 11 (Leah Di Segni).
27 I here agree with Avner, Dome of the Rock 42.
28 Ps-Matthew 20,1-2. For a comparison of both texts see: Mourad, From Hellenism to Christianity; Mourad, Mary in the Qurʾān 166-169.
29 Küchler, Jerusalem 683-697; Pringle, Churches III 287-306; Shalev-Hurvitz, Holy Sites Encircled 141-167 (with a differing date to the fifth c.); 401 fig. 13.
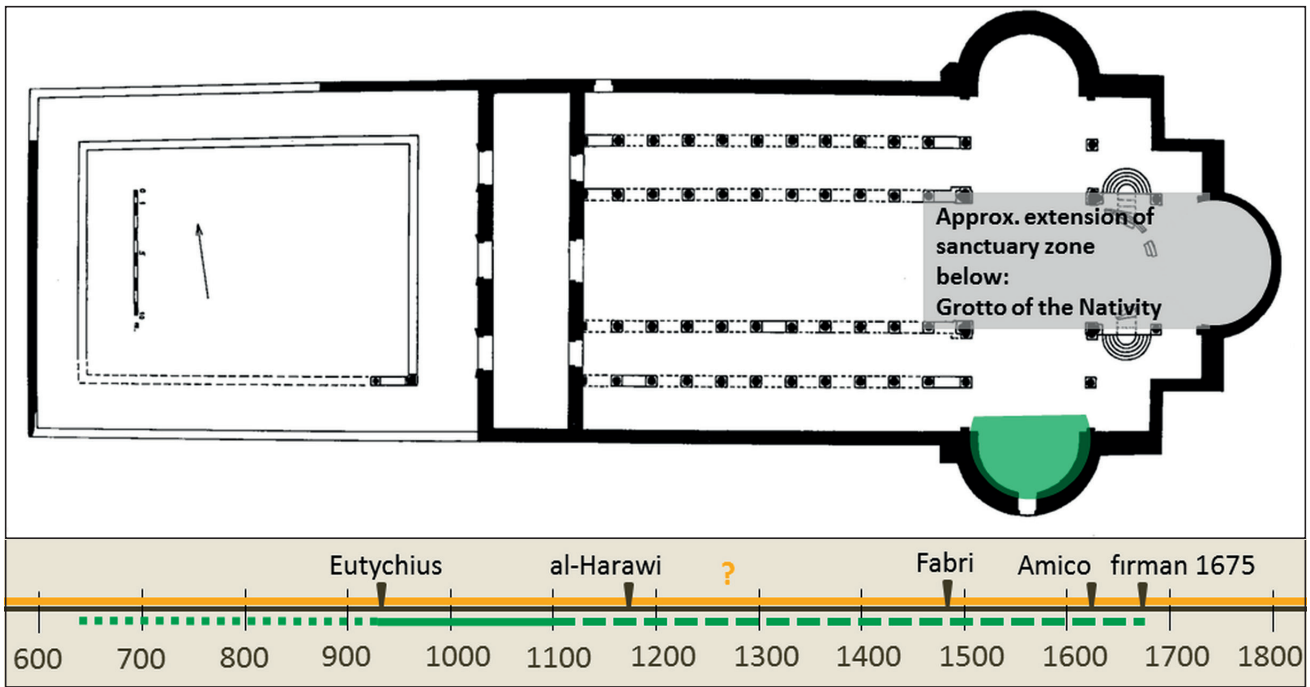30 Tarchnischvili, Lectionnaire 1,29 f.; 2,26 f.

Fig. 2 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity. Ground plan. – (Plate Verstegen 2015; Plan Ovadiah, Corpus fig. 22b).

lehem and was now shown in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem (**fig. 2**)[31]. There was also a Christian author who testified that in the first half of the tenth century Muslims used parts of the Church of the Nativity as a prayer hall. The *Annals* of Eutychios (Saʿīd ibn al-Baṭrīq, the Melkite patriarch of Alexandria who died around 940) handed down a legendary account about ʿUmar ibn al-Ḫaṭṭāb (r. 634-644), who was a close confidant of Mohammed and the second caliph. While visiting the Church of the Nativity at prayer time, he asked Jerusalem's Patriarch Sophronios (634-638) where he could perform a prayer[32]. Sophronios is said to have pointed towards the »southern vault«. Eutychios goes on by writing that in fact this part of the building later became a Muslim place of worship, while ʿUmar allegedly assured special privileges to the church by contract. It is interesting that Eutychios tells us that in his day, which means about 935, the Muslims did not comply with these regulations. The result had been that in those parts of the church older wall paintings or mosaics with Christian iconography had been eliminated and replaced by Qurʾānic verses. In addition, Muslims would not enter one by one, which Christians would apparently have considered to be acceptable, but assembled at prayer times, and a muezzin even called them to prayer[33].

For a reconstruction of where the Muslim place of prayer might have been installed inside the precinct of the Church

of the Nativity according to the descriptions in Eutychios' account (a vaulted place in the south of the building containing Christian imagery, and being spacious enough for a communal prayer), the most probable part of the building would be the southern apse of the triconch church that had been erected in the sixth century in place of an earlier Constantinian church. Probably the reason for the Muslim use of the southern apse as a place of prayer was that this part of the church pointed towards Mecca, like a *miḥrāb*, and thus suited the needs or convention of accentuating the *qibla*, the Muslim prayer direction. But maybe there were some more reasons rooted in the structure and interior appearance of the building in the seventh century onwards.

As recent investigations by a mainly Italian team of the University of Ferrara have shown, the triconch building replaced the Constantinian foundation shortly before the Muslim conquest of the region[34]. Radiocarbon analyses of the wooden beams of the building give a date of 605 ± 50 years[35]. In addition to other historical and archaeological criteria I suggest that the rebuilding took place from the 560s onwards[36]. While in the west and north of the building the archaeological investigations have revealed adjoining buildings (e. g. of a monastery), to date no early Byzantine structures are known on the southern side of the church, besides an entrance to burial chambers below the church.

31 The Persian author al-Iṣṭaḫrī stated that a fragment of this palm tree was shown in the Church of the Nativity (before 951). This was repeated by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Baṭṭūṭa) in 1355. See Baldi, Enchiridion nos 120 f.
32 Eutychios, Annalenwerk 120.
33 Eutychios, Annalenwerk 120.

34 Bacci et al., Church of the Nativity. For general introductions to the history and archaeology of the Church of the Nativity see: Bagatti, Betlemme; Restle, Bethlehem; Ovadiah, Corpus 33-37; Stekelis / Avi-Yonah / Tzaferis, Bethlehem.
35 Bacci et al., Church of the Nativity e25.
36 Verstegen, Heiliger Ort 449-455.

Fig. 3 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity. Exterior view of the southern conch, upper level. – (Photo Verstegen, 2010).

Each apse of the triconch was lit by three windows that were placed at a high level in the walls. In the southern apse the one in the middle is now used as a door giving access to a high level terrace (**fig. 3**), and the recent investigations suggested that in the beginning all three windows might have served as doors. More on-site research is needed concerning this point. If there was at least one door in the original plan, then it is possible that Muslim believers could have entered their place of prayer without crossing the nave of the church.

One more reason for the use of the southern apse as a separate Muslim place of prayer might have been the situation of the liturgical arrangements in the eastern part of the Church of the Nativity (see **fig. 2**). It was typical for churches at that time that the most sacred areas were separated by low barriers, so that only privileged persons like clerics could enter them. In the Church of the Nativity, this sanctuary zone probably was the area marked in grey in the reconstruction. The sanctuary contained the altar placed under a *ciborium*, the seats of the clerics in the eastern apse and a baptismal font next to them. Flights of steps at the northern and the southern side of the sanctuary led down to the grotto of the Nativity with the birthplace of Jesus and made this holy place

accessible for pilgrims. It is quite clear that both side apses did not belong to the sanctuary and thus to the liturgically most important and most frequented part of the building. As there were no altars, relics or other important »points of interest« situated there, perhaps it was quite easy to pass the southern apse over to the Muslim community.

During the time of the common use of the eastern parts of the church by Christians and Muslims, no permanent installations seem to have been established to separate the two religious groups. At least, no such arrangement has been demonstrated so far[37]. It is likely that a separation was achieved either by the use of lightweight materials such as a wooden screen or textiles, or by differing time-spans in which the groups were allowed to enter the building. Whether there was ever any form of separation at all cannot be determined yet.

Later, in the Crusader period, Muslims continued to be given the opportunity to visit the Church of the Nativity as pilgrims[38]. The Muslim place of prayer in the southern conch did not exist any longer, as the whole building was refurbished and decorated with a new Christian iconographic programme[39]. Even after Saladin's conquest of the Holy Land and the departure of the Crusaders, the church remained in

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37 Harvey, Structural Survey VI already noted this point in 1935. The latest investigations of the building were done in 2010/2011 by an Italian team conducted by Claudio Alessandri. See: Alessandri/Mallardo, Structural Assessments.

38 Mentioned by al-Harawi in 1173. See Harawī, Kitāb az-ziyārāt 29 (ed. Sourdel-Thomine 69 f.).

39 Kühnel, Ausschmückungsprogramm; Kühnel, Decoration; Keshman, Crusader Wall Mosaics.
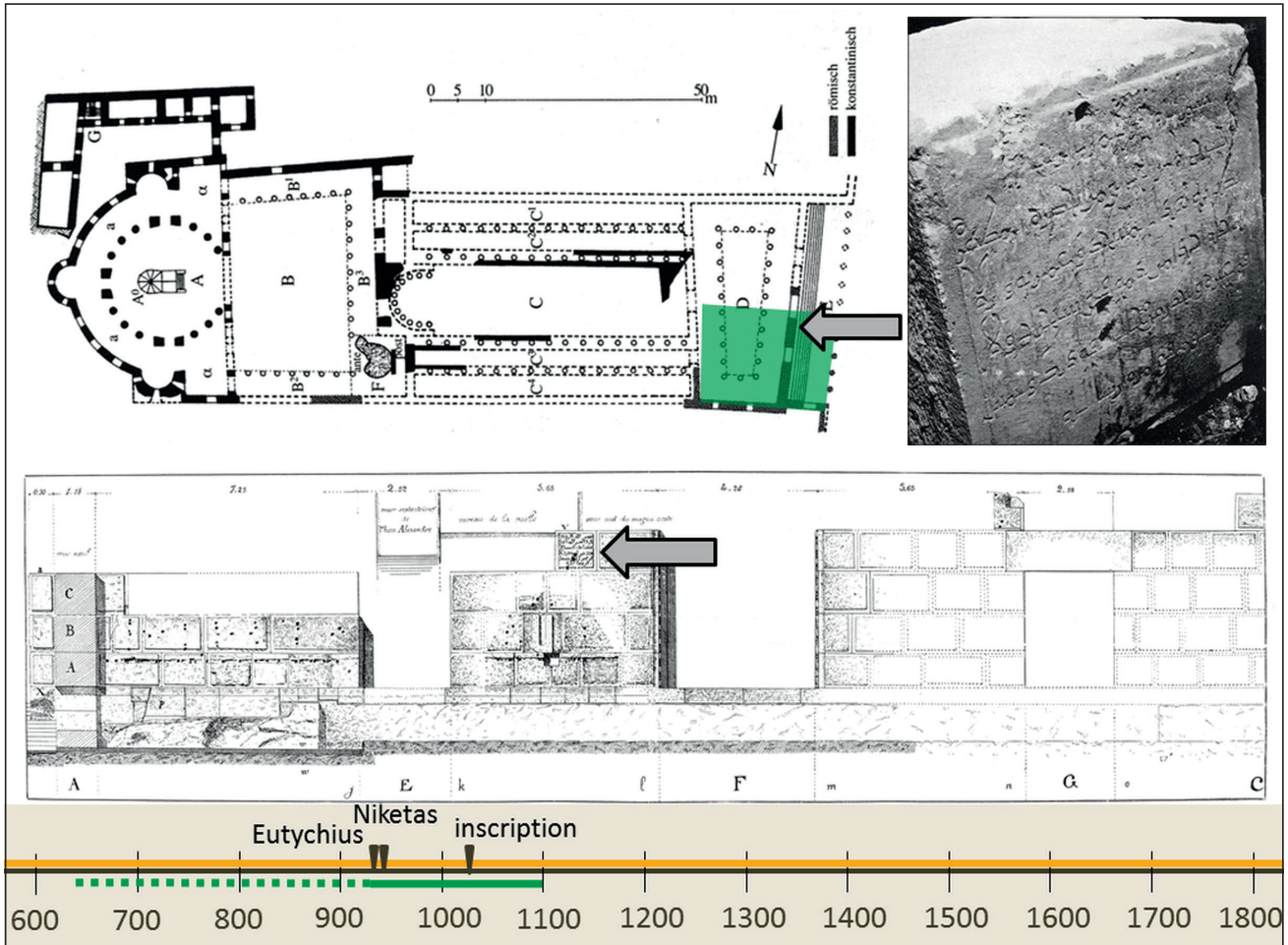
Fig. 4 Jerusalem, Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre). Ground plan (Krüger), the area of the mosque (green), and the place of the inscription (arrows) are marked. – (Plate Verstegen, 2015; Plan Küchler, Jerusalem fig. 232; Photo Vincent/Abel: Jérusalem pl. VI).

Christian hands and was administered by the local Orthodox clergy[40]. The treaty of 1229 between Frederick II and Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil stipulated that the Latin Church would take over the property again, and that Muslims had the right to make a pilgrimage to the church and to pray there[41].

This practice is also documented in later sources. In the 1480s, the Dominican pilgrim Felix Fabri reported simultaneous visits to the cave of the Nativity by Muslims and Christians, describing their behaviour as following: »Many times I have seen pagans falling down at the place kissing it with a sigh and weeping«[42]. In 1620, Bernardino Amico still mentioned Muslims visiting the Grotto of the Nativity[43], and an official decree (*firman*) of the Ottoman government given in 1609 confirms that it was common practice for Muslims from the Jerusalem region to undertake pilgrimages to the Church of the Nativity and to perform prayers in the grotto[44]. In 1675,

there was a dispute between local Christian and Muslim authorities on the accessibility of the Church of the Nativity, based on a judgement that Muslim dignitaries from Jerusalem could initiate a great common annual pilgrimage to the Grotto of the Nativity, culminating in a ceremonial prayer[45]. As a result of this debate, the Grand Mufti Ali in Istanbul, the highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire, issued a *firman* which finally condemned Muslims entering the Church of the Nativity[46].

Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre) in Jerusalem

In the aforementioned *Annals* of Eutychios, the author also provides information about the Church of the Resurrection

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40 See Harvey, Structural Survey XI; Peri, Christianity 67. A *firman* executed by the Ottoman government in 1589 confirmed the Christian property in the Churches of the Nativity in Bethlehem and of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, see Peri, Christianity 69.
41 Harvey, Structural survey XI.
42 Felix Fabri, Pilgerfahrt 55: »Ich hab' oft gesehen, daß die Heiden da auf der Stätte niederfielen auf ihr Angesicht und die Statt mit Seufzen und Weinen geküßt haben«.
43 Amico, Trattato 12.
44 Peri, Christianity 70.
45 Peri, Christianity 70.
46 Peri, Christianity 73.

Fig. 5 Jerusalem, Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre). Aerial view with the Ayyubid ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb mosque (bottom centre). – (Photo Ilan Arad, 2012; Israel Heritage Building Foto Nr. 1-3000-2013; Wikimedia Commons CC-BY-SA-3.0).

in Jerusalem, a church that originated in the Constantinian period[47]. The author reported that »in our times« – he wrote about 935 – Muslims gathered there to pray and were called by a muezzin to do so[48]. Again, in reference to a legendary prayer of ʿUmar on the steps of the church entrance[49], he said that Muslims would pray on the steps »which are in front of the gates of Constantine. They took half of the court, built a mosque there and called it ›Mosque of ʿOmar‹«[50]. Since the church of the fourth century is well known through excavations and research results[51], the described location of the mosque can be reconstructed (**fig. 4**). It was situated in the eastern courtyard of the church that was entered by a series of steps from one of the municipal main streets. After this courtyard, which possibly was surrounded by porticoes, visitors entered a huge basilica with five naves and upper galleries,

and behind it, another open courtyard, and the rotunda of the Anastasis (»resurrection«) with Jesus' tomb in its centre.

The rest of the southern enclosure wall of the eastern atrium is still visible today. However, these walls do not show any structural evidence for the former existence of a mosque at this place. For example, any indication of a *miḥrāb* is lacking[52]. However, there is also a Muslim source testifying that the eastern atrium housed a mosque during a certain time span. An Arabic inscription was set into the wall on the left side of the main entrance to the atrium, giving the instructions »to preserve and restore this mosque and to forbid all non-Muslims to enter here, for whatsoever reason, even for the purpose of paying the poll tax (*istiḫrāǧ*) or for any other reason. Any transgression of this is hereby warned against. This decree should be carried out literally, God willing«[53]. The

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47 Since the Crusader period the term »Holy Sepulchre« has become established in the West.

48 Eutychios, Annalenwerk 120.

49 See Tamcke, Christsein 270 for a critical exegesis of Eutychios' account. The text clearly intends to preserve the Christian privileges at the holy sites.

50 Eutychios, Annalenwerk 120. See also: Busse, ʿUmar-Moschee 75-79; Küchler, Jerusalem 447.

51 Vincent/Abel, Jérusalem 40-300; fasc. 5: pls III-XXXIII; Corbo, Santo Sepolcro; Bieberstein/Bloedhorn, Jerusalem II 183-216; Krüger, Grabeskirche 40-70; Küchler, Jerusalem 409-483; Verstegen, Heiliger Ort 47-177; Shalev-Hurvitz, Holy Sites Encircled 43-78.

52 However, several openings in the wall were documented. In comparison with the archaeological record at the Church of the Kathisma, one might suppose that a *miḥrāb* could have been installed in one of the former openings.

53 Vincent/Abel, Jérusalem fasc. 5: VI.b; van Berchem, Corpus 53-67 no. 24; fig. 13; pl. 5; Hirschberg, Mount of Olives (drawing, date to the end of ninth/beginning of tenth century differs); Busse, ʿUmar-Moschee 75 f.; Bahat, Physical Infrastructure 59 f.; Gil, History of Palestine 146 f.; Bieberstein/Bloedhorn, Jerusalem II 211 f.; Krüger, Grabeskirche fig. 66; Küchler, Jerusalem 411; 447. The English translation cited above is based on Bahat, Physical Infrastructure 60 (incomplete reading). I am indebted to Amikam Elad, Jerusalem, for the complete reading and interpretation of the text. The original stone today is kept in the Türk ve İslâm Eserleri Müzesi at Istanbul. Concerning the perception of Muslim inscriptions at Christian churches by Christians, see the contribution of Alicia Walker in the present volume.

Fig. 6 Jerusalem, Crusader Church of St Anne. Foundation inscription of the Madrasa al-Ṣalāḥiyya in 1192 CE/588 AH, set in the wall over the main entrance portal. – (Photo U. Verstegen).

stone inscription is datable to the first half of the eleventh century, i. e. in Fatimid times, by palaeographic criteria[54]. This might imply that the place still went on to serve as a mosque after the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (r. 996-1021) had given the order to demolish the Church of the Resurrection in the year 1009, and the building had been rebuilt in part by the Christian congregation. After the Crusaders had erected new buildings in this area in the twelfth century, the mosque must have disappeared. As a substitute for it, the new ʿUmar ibn al-Ḫaṭṭāb Mosque (or Ǧāmiʿ al-Afḍal) (**fig. 5**) was built in 1193/589 AH following the recapture of the city by Muslim troops. This new mosque has flanked the (new) main entrance of the Holy Sepulchre Church on the south side since then, continuing the tradition of the legendary prayer of ʿUmar on the steps of the Church of the Resurrection[55].

In the tenth century, the direct vicinity of church and mosque had at least twice been the origin of conflicts be-tween the religious communities. In 939 and 966, riots started from the mosque which led to Muslims pillaging and looting the church complex[56]. Nevertheless, the written sources show that at the same time Muslims were involved in or were at least present at Christian liturgical ceremonies in the Church of the Resurrection.

For example, since the ninth century, Christian and Muslim sources attest to the Holy Fire ceremony that is celebrated even today in the Anastasis rotunda on each Holy Saturday of Easter week[57]. While Muslim authors mainly criticize the ritual as quackery (giving explanations that the fire was lit by an invisible wire)[58], beginning in the tenth century both Muslim and Christian sources describe Muslims as attending the ceremony, and that the Muslim authorities were even involved in the ceremony. For example, in a letter addressed to the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, written in 947, the author Niketas mentioned that the Muslim governor of the city and the emir from Baghdad attended the cere-

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54 Busse, ʿUmar-Moschee 76; Bahat, Physical Infrastructure 59 f.; Gil, History of Palestine 146.

55 Pahlitzsch, Transformation 52 f.; Korn, Structure 77 f. (function as a Friday mosque); Hawari, Ayyubid Jerusalem 49-51; Maoz/Nusseibeh, Jerusalem 140.

56 Eutychios, Annales 87. For the events cited in the following, see: Yaḥyā al-Antākī, Histoire 801-803. See also: Vincent/Abel, Jérusalem 245-247; Bieberstein, Gesandtenaustausch 162; Bieberstein/Bloedhorn, Jerusalem 185.

57 Vincent/Abel, Jérusalem 228-230; Canard, Déstruction 27-41; Meinardus, Holy Fire; Onasch, Lichthöhle 238 n. 79 (with more references); Gil, History of Palestine 466-468; Kratchkovsky, Feu béni; Pratsch, Grabeskirche; Jotischky, Holy Fire; Lidov, Holy Fire. The earliest descriptions of the ceremony are given by

the Frankish monk Bernhard (c. 870) and in the chapter on the several kinds of fire in the »Book of Animals« of the Muslim author al-Ǧāḥiẓ (died 868/869). See: Bernhard, Itinerarium col. 572; Canard, Déstruction 28 f. (Latin); Wilkinson, Jerusalem Pilgrims 266 (English translation). Ǧāḥiẓ, Kitāb al-ḥayawān 4,383; 6,201 f.; Canard, Déstruction 34 f. (French translation).

58 Sources are discussed at length in: Canard, Déstruction; Kratchkovsky, Feu béni; Gil, History of Palestine 466 f. In the tenth century, the Muslim author al-Masʿūdī wrote that the fire came down from heaven. At the same time, another Muslim author described that the fire emerged in the air and ran through the cupola of the Anastasis rotunda without burning its wooden construction.

mony at the gallery of the rotunda[59]. Citing older texts from the tenth century, the Iranian scholar al-Bīrūnī (973-1048) similarly described that Muslims looked down at the ceremony from the galleries inside the Holy Sepulchre rotunda[60]. Religious and secular Muslim representatives, the muezzin and the imam »of the mosque«, and the governor of the city had brought lights and placed those on Jesus' tomb, while it was still closed[61]. The Christians had previously extinguished their candles and lights, and then the whole audience waited until a clear white light appeared and ignited a lamp inside the tomb. By the light of this lamp all the lighting devices in the church and the mosque were lit, and a report on all the ceremonial events was sent to the caliph. Al-Bīrūnī's report documents an astonishing interweaving between Christian and Muslim contributions to the ceremony, and apparently the mosque of the Church of the Resurrection was closely involved in the religious practice as well.

The Holy Fire ceremony was not the only religious event in the Christian liturgical calendar of Jerusalem that clearly incorporated attendance by Muslim authorities. At the beginning of the eleventh century, the Christian Melkite chronicler Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Anṭākī (died 1066) described the Christian procession on Palm Sunday starting at the Church of al-ʿĀzarīya – the Lazarion (memorial church at Lazarus' tomb) in Bethany – and ending at the Church of the Resurrection. The account tells us that the Christians carried with them a huge olive tree trunk all the way through the city[62]. All streets were crowded with people holding crosses, praying and singing, while the Muslim governor rode ahead with his entire entourage and opened the way for the procession[63]. When the procession had reached the Church of the Resurrection, the tree was placed in front of the rock of Golgotha symbolizing the crucifixion of Jesus[64]. In 1007, the procession was forbidden by the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh. With this prohibition not only did the Christian ritual presence in the public space of Jerusalem come to an end, but also the active involvement of Muslim authorities in local Christian religious traditions.

Mount of Olives: Church of the Ascension

Following the reconquest of Jerusalem by the Ayyubid sultan Saladin in 1187, many buildings at Christian holy places remained unscathed, especially if they also were of a certain importance for Muslim believers. However, several sites of Christian property were dispossessed by the Muslim authorities. The Crusader Church of St Anne at the place of Mary's birth, for example, remained intact, but was converted into an institution for higher religious and juridical education (madrasa) by Saladin in 1192/588 AH, popularly named as the Madrasa al-Ṣalāḥīya (**fig. 6**)[65]. Thereafter, Christian pilgrims were no longer allowed to enter the building, and, according to pilgrims' accounts, only in a few cases did they manage to do so, sometimes by climbing down adventurously through a window to reach the crypt[66]. During his visit to Jerusalem in the 1330s, the German pilgrim Ludolf von Sudheim had the opportunity to enter the church. In his account, he described surprisingly that Christian frescoes showing Anne, Joachim and the birth of Mary were still visible inside the building, and that a local Muslim woman reinterpreted them as scenes from the life of Muhammad[67].

The Mount of Olives as a whole also came into Muslim hands. On top of the Mount of Olives, where once a circular building from the early Christian period had existed, the Crusaders had erected an octagonal church in the 1140s/1150s[68]. The revered place of Christ's ascension to heaven in the centre of the building was surrounded by a vaulted ambulatory. In the middle of the octagon there was a round chapel that contained the stone that showed Christ's footprint and therefore was said to mark the place of the Ascension. In its main features, this small circular building has been preserved until today, whereas the surrounding octagon gradually declined over the centuries. Today, only parts of the former exterior walls still exist, now surrounding the courtyard of the aedicule (**fig. 7**).

After the fall of Jerusalem in 1187, the octagonal church remained intact at first and was converted into a Muslim memorial building or mosque[69]. The former adjacent Crusader collegiate foundation had to be abandoned. In 1211/1212, the later bishop of Utrecht, Willibrand of Oldenburg, reported that at the place of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives »a faithless Saracen has established an oratory in honour of Mahomet«[70]. This is the first source of a new tradition that proves a continuous usage of the building by Muslims since then. However, in the following centuries Christian pilgrims apparently did not have problems entering the octagonal building and visiting the place of the Ascension. In the middle of the fourteenth century, the Italian Franciscan Friar Nicolas of Poggibonsi gave an account for the first

59 Canard, Déstruction 33; Gil, History of Palestine 466-468; Kratchkovsky, Feu béni 263f.
60 Canard, Déstruction 36f.; Gil, History of Palestine 466; Kratchkovsky, Feu béni 263f.
61 On the inspection of the tomb by the local political authorities, see: Peri, Christianity 119f.
62 Vincent/Abel, Jérusalem 230 (with French translation); Gil, History of Palestine 465; Cuffel, Disasters 116f. (with English translation).
63 This was a clear violation of several rules given in the Pact of ʿUmar concerning behavioural modes of ḏimmīs (non-Muslims), e.g. it was forbidden for Christians to carry crosses or to sing loudly in public. See Cuffel, Disasters 117.
64 Following the Typikon 1,4 of the Anastasis. See Vincent/Abel, Jérusalem 238.

65 Bieberstein/Bloedhorn, Jerusalem III 170-173; Pahlitzsch, Transformation 48f.; 53-55; Küchler, Jerusalem 336; Pringle, Churches III 143 (with sources); Hawari, Ayyubid Jerusalem 28; 187-189; Irwin, Palestine 314f. The founding inscription over the main portal is documented in: van Berchem, Corpus 91-95 no. 35 pl. 34; Hawari, Ayyubid Jerusalem 188.
66 Pringle, Churches III 143f. (with sources).
67 Ludolph, De de itinere terrae sanctae liber 38 (ed. Dycks 76).
68 Vincent/Abel, Jérusalem 360-419 pls XL-XLII; Bieberstein/Bloedhorn, Jerusalem III 299-303; Pringle, Churches III 72-88 (with abundant references); Küchler, Jerusalem 876-897.
69 Korn, Structure 78.
70 Willibrand von Oldenburg, Itinerarium sancte terre, see Baldi, Enchiridion no. 641; Küchler, Jerusalem 892; Pringle, Churches III 75.
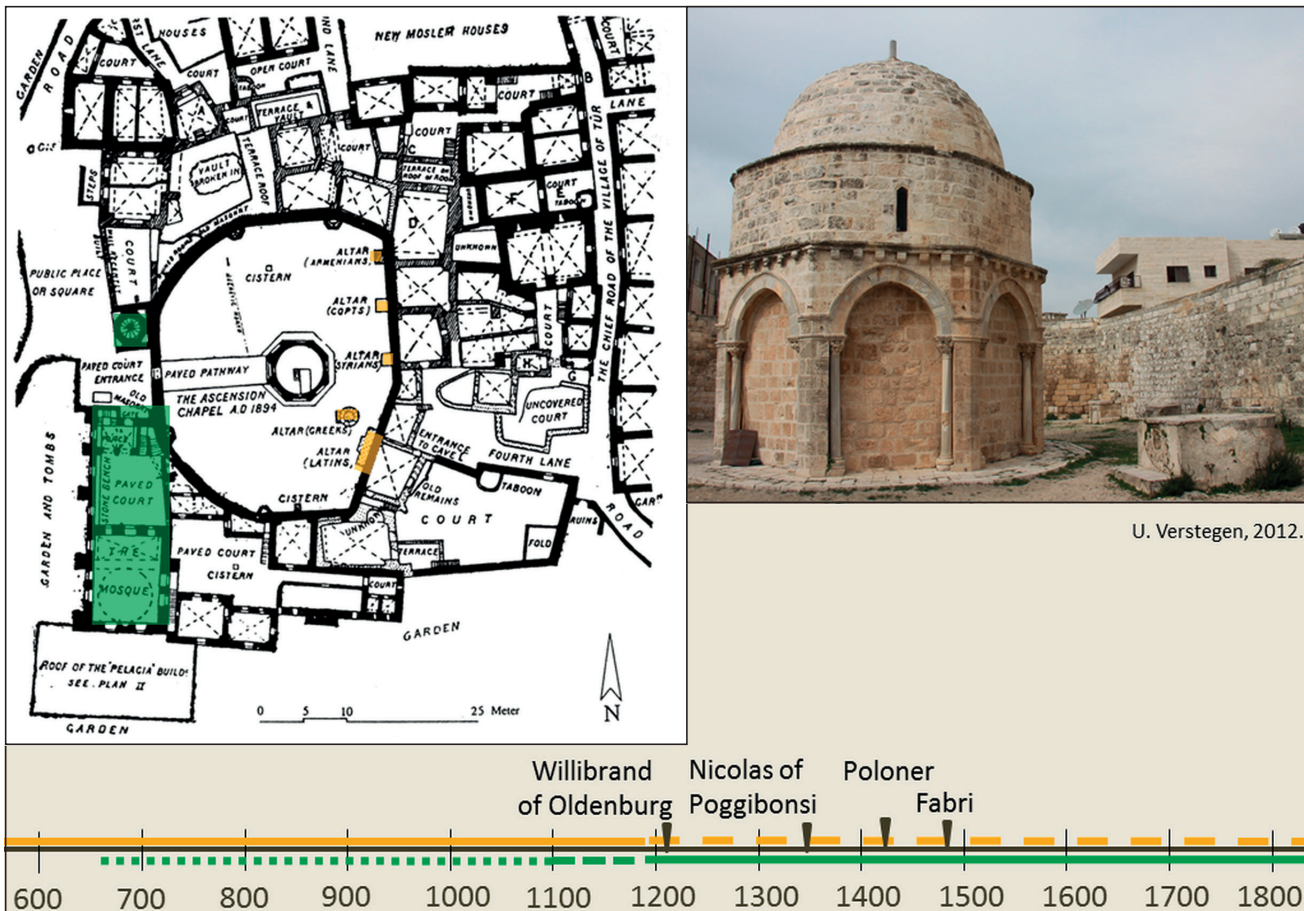
Fig. 7 Jerusalem, Mount of Olives, Church of the Ascension. Plan [Schick] and exterior view. The altars of the Christian congregations are marked in yellow, the Muslim derwish monastery in green. – (Plate Verstegen, 2015; Plan C. Schick, Palestine Exploration Quarterly 28, 1896, 313; Photo U. Verstegen, 2012).

time that half a drachma was demanded from pilgrims as an admission fee[71].

In 1422, John Poloner mentioned that the *aedicule* was used as a mosque and that an Arabic inscription had been placed over its entrance[72]. In addition to the occasional visits by pilgrims, since the fifteenth century the sources testify that the various Christian confessions (Latins, Greeks, Armenians, and so-called »Indians«) gathered in the building on Ascension Day and celebrated the Mass or Divine Liturgy[73]. Apparently, they were allowed to perform a regular, official celebration on the feast day, which in the liturgical calendar commemorated the event that had traditionally been con-

nected to this place[74]. Probably at that time, the altars for the various Christian confessions were built at the east end of the court (see **fig. 7**).

Meanwhile the octagonal church had fallen into ruins, the eastern parts were missing, and the sumptuous interior decoration (columns, marble floor and wall coverings) had been removed. Just the *aedicule* had stayed untouched, as Jesus' footprints were revered by Muslims as well[75]. No altar existed within the *aedicule* – and does not exist to this day[76]. At the end of the sixteenth century, it became more and more difficult for Christians to get permission to enter the small building[77].

71 Nicolas of Poggibonsi, see Baldi, Enchiridion no. 645; Pringle, Churches III 75 (English translation).
72 John Poloner, see Baldi, Enchiridion no. 648; Pringle, Churches III 76. Poloner translated the text as »I am the gate of mercy.«
73 Louis de Rochechouart, see Baldi, Enchiridion no. 649; Pringle, Churches III 76.
74 On the different sources mentioning these liturgical assemblies, see Pringle, Churches III 76 f.
75 Description by the Dominican pilgrim Felix Fabri 1480-1483, see Baldi, Enchiridion no. 650. Felix Fabri is the first one to mention a wall that cut the formerly regular enclosure wall in the east of the court. He blames the Muslims for removing the original architectural decoration.
76 Quaresmi, Elucidatio terrae sanctae 313. See also Baldi, Enchiridion no. 652; Pringle, Churches III 77 (English translation).
77 A Muslim custodian had to give Christian pilgrims permission to enter the building. Additionally, the Franciscans, who were responsible for the support of Latin

Christian pilgrims since the Late Middle Ages, were in possession of a key to the chapel. See Pringle, Churches III 76 (with sources). In his pilgrims' guide of 1586, Giovanni Zuallardo notes the difficult situation as follows: »In quella Capella nel pauimento, si vede la forma d'vno de'piedi del nostro Saluatore, restataui impressa, come se fusse in cera, nella pietra: E sono gl'vltimi vestigij, che lasciò, salendo al Cielo, essendo quella dell'altro por tata, e posta nel Tempio moderno di Salomone, per i Turchi, & iui da loro tenuto in gran riuerenza, si come anco questa già detta, essendo a'Christiani la detta Cappellai stata tolta, e vietatagli l'entrata, sotto pena di ducati ducento d'oro, e fattone vna Moschea. Il che è stato cagione, che non habbiamo hauuto tanto bene di poterla vedere di dentro; anzi fù forza contentarsi di salutarla da 1ontano, e per la Porta del detto muro. / Alle volte auiene, che dando qualche cortesia al Santone, che n'ha la cura (massimamente quando è solo) ch'egli permette secretamente l'adito; mà non bisogna, se non entrare,& vscire, dubitando di esser visto, e tradito; / Quelli, e principalmente i Religiosi, che vi sono stati introdotti, dicono questa forma

Fig. 8 Jerusalem, Mount of Olives, Church of the Ascension. Interior view with the *miḥrāb* in the southern part of the building. – (Photo U. Verstegen, 2012).

In 1023 AH / 1614-1615 and in the following years, a mosque, a dervish convent (*zāwiya*, the so-called zāwiya Asʿadiyya), and probably the minaret (still existing north of the portal) were erected in the south and west of the court[78]. At the same time, the Ascension Chapel was largely renovated, and a tambour and dome were added[79]. Because of the masonry details and the surrounding moulding, Denys Pringle supposed that the *miḥrāb* niche in the interior southern wall of the *aedicule* (**fig. 8**) was established during this renovation[80]. There is no clear evidence that a Muslim prayer niche had existed at the same place before (e. g. in 1422).

Summary

The examined buildings at sites that were venerated by Christians and Muslims in Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the period between the Muslim conquest of Palestine in the seventh century and the late Middle Ages provide clear evidence for parallel use by Muslims and Christians. Until the Crusader period specific areas were marked in existing Christian buildings where Muslims set up their own places of worship, where members of the local Muslim population could gather at the regular prayer times and where Muslim pilgrims could pray as well. These Muslim areas were located at very different spots in the building and, according to the specific situation, could result either in a more intense or in a slighter contact between the two communities and their respective practices of prayer and worship. Muslims who wanted to pray in the southern apse of the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem possibly had to cross the nave (or could enter by a separate entrance in the southern conch?). There might not have existed any acoustic separation of the different activities that took place in the choir. Muslims, however, who prayed in the eastern atrium of the Church of the Resurrection at Jerusalem, might have come in contact with Christians much less, and they would not have been disturbed by the official Christian liturgy and individual prayer. While the situation in Jerusalem corresponds to the concept of the contiguity of church and mosque – which Mattia Guidetti has demonstrated as being a common practice in early Muslim times – in Bethlehem the Muslim place of worship probably was installed in the immediate vicinity of the Christian liturgical centre of the building. In the Kathisma Church the main memorial building might have been taken over and adopted by the Muslim congregation.

essere la più polita& d'vn piede il più bello, che si possa trouare nel Mondo.« See Zuallardo, Viaggio 162.

78 Tobler, Siloahquelle 123; Küchler, Jerusalem 893; Ze'evi, Ottoman Century 72 f.; Natsheh, Mount of Olives 136-138. The minaret was possibly erected on walls of the former Crusader bell tower, see Pringle, Churches III 86.

79 Tobler, Siloahquelle 123. The dome was restored in 1720/1721, collapsed in an earthquake in 1834, and was subsequently renovated by the Latins, Greeks and Armenians. See Pringle, Churches III 77.

80 Pringle, Churches III 81 f. He supposed that the interior surface of the wall had been the result of the restoration in 1617. The smaller flanking niches, he thus assumed, could be part of the original Crusader construction.

The written sources show that even in Christian liturgical processions and celebrations such as the Holy Fire during Easter, Muslims were at least temporarily involved and/or present as spectators. The staging of the event at the holy site therefore influenced not only the collective memory of the Christian community of Jerusalem and of the visiting pilgrims, but also of the Muslims who inhabited the same spaces.

After the Crusader period, many Christian holy sites went into Muslim hands, and not all of them remained accessible for Christians thereafter. In addition to the altars of different Christian confessions, Muslim prayer niches were installed, e. g. at the Chapel of the Ascension or in the Tomb of Mary. The reason for building new mosques in front of the entrances of these places in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries might have been that the older chapels were too small for use by Muslims during the regular prayer times.

Apart from that, the simultaneous use of the places seems to have posed hardly any problem, since Muslims and Christians either did not bother each other or agreed on different times of use[81]. Christian pilgrims, for example, were advised to visit Mary's Tomb or the Chapel of the Ascension before sunrise. Regular services as well as larger liturgical celebrations on the feast days which commemorated the events at a specific holy place seem to have been permitted for the Christian congregations.

The buildings studied so far offer only very few indications concerning the framing of the holy places with religious imagery and symbols. In the course of the restructuring of the Kathisma Church for Muslim purposes, new mosaic floors were laid out which by their iconography suited Islamic religious beliefs and traditions. When an additional Muslim place of worship was set up in the Church of the Nativity, older Christian images in the surrounding walls were destroyed and replaced by Qurʾānic texts. The appearance of the building's interior would probably have been quite hybrid by today's viewing habits. When the Crusader Church of St Anne was converted into a madrasa at the end of the twelfth century, somewhere in the building images of Christian figures seemingly were not whitewashed and remained visible. Further historical and archaeological research thus might reveal new insights into the processes of the material and visual adoptions of religious sites in relation to their shared religious usage.

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81 Peri, Christianity 85 stresses the very low number of complaints in Ottoman times.

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Summary / Zusammenfassung

How to Share a Sacred Place – The Parallel Christian and Muslim Use of the Major Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem

Due to the importance of Jesus / ʿĪsā and Maria / Maryam in the Quran, after the Arab-Islamic expansion in the former East Roman provinces of the Levant there arose a praxis of religious use at certain existing Christian sites of remembrance by Muslims as well. On the basis of examples from Jerusalem and Bethlehem, this contribution discusses the phenomenon of multireligious use of sacred spaces by Christians and Muslims in the period between the conquest of the region in the 630s and the Late Middle Ages, supplemented by glimpses into the Ottoman Period. It is also shown with what architectural, medial and ritual elements plural arrangements of space were implemented and established.

Wie man einen heiligen Ort teilt – Die Parallelnutzung der großen christlichen heiligen Stätten in Jerusalem und Bethlehem durch Christen und Muslime

Aufgrund der Bedeutung, die Jesus / ʿĪsā und Maria / Maryam im Koran einnehmen, etablierte sich nach der arabisch-islamischen Expansion in den vormals oströmischen Gebieten der Levante an einigen bestehenden christlichen Erinnerungsstätten auch eine Praxis der Religionsausübung durch Muslime. Anhand von Fallbeispielen aus Jerusalem und Bethlehem diskutiert der vorliegende Beitrag das Phänomen der multireligiösen Nutzung religiöser Räume durch Christen und Muslime im Zeitraum zwischen der Eroberung der Region in den 630er Jahren und dem Spätmittelalter, erweitert um Ausblicke in die osmanische Zeit. Es wird aufgezeigt, mit welchen architektonischen, medialen und rituellen Elementen plurale Raumarrangements implementiert und etabliert wurden.