Sacred space, whether materialized in the form of man-made structures or in natural sites plays a pivotal role in the religio-cultural heritage of all religious communities in the Middle East. Places considered imbued by the divine in one way or another have traditionally functioned as the centers of ritual and spiritual life. As such, they contributed to the formation and preservation of group identity and communal memory, especially among religious minorities who may have had only limited capacity of publicly expressing/affirming their religious heritage. Some sacred space may be shared between different religious groups, often leading to syncretic practices and creating an intricate network of social ties. In other cases, such spots may be(come) the sites of inter- and intra-communal contestation and power-struggle, highlighting the complex relation between different religious communities, ethnic groups and social segments.

The way sacred space is used and conceptualized has never been static, despite claims to tradition, but reflects the various internal and external challenges encountered by the different faith groups.
and the strategies employed to cope with them. Social and cultural transformation, urbanization, political upheavals, persecution, forced migration and diasporization all impact the way sacred space is imagined, (re-)created, shared or appropriated by the various communities all over the Middle East and in the Western diaspora.

This online workshop aims to bring together experts studying different aspects of sacred space as religious heritage in the Middle East, talking about their research in the cyber space at a time when sharing physical space is not possible.

Schedule

23 April, Friday

15.00 Markus Dreßler (Leipzig University): Welcome and Introduction

15.15 – 16.45: Yezidi Sacred Space, Identity and Heritage


Benjamin Raßbach (Leipzig University): Yezidi Sacred Space – Kurdish Nationalist Approaches and Religious Revival

Eszter Spät (Central European University): Sheikh Mend Should also Have a Shrine! Yezidi Sacred Space, Displacement and Identity

16.45 – 17.15 Coffee break

17.15 – 18.15: Sacred Sites, Secular Lives

Ahmet Kerim Gültekin (Leipzig University): Kurdish Alevi Sacred Places (Jiares) and the Contemporary Environmental Struggles in Dersim.

Edith Szanto (University of Alabama): The Making of Shi‘ite Sacred Space in Syria
23 April, Friday

15.00 – 16.30: Sharing, Contesting, Reclaiming

Laila Prager (University of Hamburg): Challenging Alawite Pilgrimage Sites in Turkey: Interreligious battlefields for authenticity and territoriality

Mustafa Diktaş (New Europe College, Bucharest): Mar Jiryes Al Batiyeh: A Shared Shrine in Lebanon


16.30 – 17.00 Coffee break

17.00 – 18.00: Sacred Space Reconfigured

Christine Robins (University of Exeter): Configuring Sacred Space in Diaspora: The Case of the Sabian Mandaeans

Robert Langer (Bundeswehr University München): Zoroastrian Shrines in Iran: Between Ancient Roots and Modern Functionality

To register as listener please visit:

https://ceu-edu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYsdOyvrTwjGNHXiQuFzQBJFciTcXjMPax