

Sacred and Cultural Heritage of Sacred Cities

Kutsal Kentlerin Kutsal ve Kültürel Miras Değerleri

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ABSTRACT

Sacred cities hold not only heritage value and sacred value but also cultural values that play an active role in shaping the life and space of these cities. In this study, the concepts of sacred heritage and city, which are included in the "analysis frameworks defining cultural heritage" set forth by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 2004, are described through examples considered to be sacred to the monotheistic religions. The definition criteria for sacred cities were established within the framework of sacredness, divinity, common and differentiated characteristics of space(s) in belief systems, formation of sacred spaces in the natural and built environment, and tangible and intangible factors. The empirical evaluation performed as part of this study was based on the sacred city definition criteria governing cities that belong to living celestial (divine) religions, that are part of the built-architectural environment (man-made), that have preserved their religious and cultural values to date and are still considered sacred, and that allow religious functions to be performed. The results of the study revealed that the tangible and intangible values of the sacred cities, which are defined by their present cultural qualities, reflect the meanings that people attribute to the place. While in every city there are sanctuaries or temples, the differences in their sacred values can only be understood by establishing criteria for defining sacred cities. This study aimed to raise awareness about sacred cities within the expanding scope of cultural heritage values that need to be protected, and to examine the heritage values of sacred cities, the first study to do this.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, sacred city, sacred heritage, renewed (new) expansions in conservation.

ÖZ

Kutsal kentler sadece kültürel değerleriyle değil, yaşamı ve mekanı biçimlendirmede etkin olan kutsal değerleriyle birlikte sürdürülmesi gereken miras değerleridir. Bu çalışmada bu yaklaşımla; semavi dinler için kutsal kabul edilen bazı kentler üzerinden, 2004 yılında ICOMOS'un öngördüğü "kültürel miras tanımlamada analiz çerçevelerinde" yer alan kutsal miras ve kent kavramları tanımlanmıştır. Kutsal, kutsallık, inanç sistemlerinde mekân(lar)ın ortak ve farklılaşan özellikleri, doğal ve yapılı çevredeki kutsal mekânların biçimlenişi, somut ve somut olmayan göstergeler çerçevesinde kutsal kent tanımlama kriterleri oluşturulmuştur. Kutsal kent tanımlama kriterlerine göre yaşayan semavi (ilahi) dinlere ait, yapılı-mimari çevreyi kapsayan (insan eliyle üretilmiş), dinsel ve kültürel değerlerini günümüze kadar korumuş ve halen kutsal kabul edilen, dini işlevlere olanak tanıyan kentler üzerinde ampirik bir değerlendirme yapılmıştır. Değerlendirme sonucunda günümüzde kültürel nitelikleri ile tanımlanan kutsal kentlerin, kutsallık ile somut ve somut olmayan değerlerinin, insanların mekâna yüklediği anlam(lar)ın yadsındığı tespit edilmiştir. Her kentte mabet(ler) olmasına rağmen kimi kentlerin kutsal değerleri ile neden ve nasıl farklılaştığının ancak kutsal kent tanımlama kriterlerinin oluşturulması ile anlaşılabilceği görülmüştür. Bu içerik ile makalenin amacı korunması gereken kültürel miras değerlerinin genişleyen kapsamında kutsal kentler üzerinden farkındalık yaratmak ve alan yazında kutsal kentlerin miras değerlerini ilk kez ele almaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel miras, kutsal kent, kutsal miras, korumada yeni(lenen) açılımlar.

Introduction

In all monotheistic and polytheistic belief systems, to experience the sacred and to connect with it, sacredness has been attributed to either nature or built environment and/or architectural structure of different characteristics and sizes, such as cities. Cities attributed to sacredness namely that is, the cities defined and called as sacred are heritage sites that have witnessed the history of humanity and religions through their sacred places and structures, sacred values (religious, spiritual, etc.), and symbolic meanings.



Sacred cities, along with the cultural values they hold, were first presented by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 2004 for inclusion on the World Heritage List (WHL) created by UNESCO to prevent the loss or destruction of cultural values. These cities are defined as sacred heritage in the "Typological, Chronological-Regional, Thematic" analysis frameworks. Thus, attention has been drawn to the fact that cultural heritage values shaped by beliefs are the main element in the formation of sacred cities.

Within the context of these developments regarding the diversity and sustainability of cultural heritage, this study seeks to establish the criteria for defining sacred cities through the concepts of sacredness, divinity, and sacred space. From the examination of examples of cities recognized as sacred in living monotheistic religions according to these established criteria, it was concluded that sacred cities are common heritage of humanity that must be protected along with their sacred values, which shape their cultural values.

Sacred Space in the Sustainability Process of Cultural Heritage

In 2004, sacred places started to be included on the WHL, which was been created in 1978 to fulfill the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (afterhere referred as World Heritage Convention) (1972)¹. Although the statement, "sacred values and the importance of place in terms of belief systems" was included in the registration of sacred places, architectural features were the primary reason for registration.

The Process of Evaluation of Sacred Places in the Context of Cultural Heritage

International studies on the sustainability of cultural heritage have also supported the development of the concept of sacred heritage without mentioning or emphasizing the sacred in the background. The following documents, which are briefly explained below, were instrumental in this process.

The Washington Charter (1987), an extension of The Venice Charter (1964), sets the principles and guidelines for the preservation of "the character of the city". This charter references the idea of sacred space by defining the character of the city on the grounds of material (concrete) elements and intangible (religion, tradition, etc.) elements (ICOMOS, 1987).

The Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) features the principles of cultural and heritage diversity, values and originality and places special emphasis on minority cultures (ICOMOS, 1994). This document sets forth the idea that the authenticity of heritage values is not based on one set of unchangeable and general criteria but can vary from culture to culture and even within the same culture. The document is credited with accelerating the preservation of values belonging to different belief systems. With the analysis and action programs on the diversity of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and the credibility conferred on the WHL (UNESCO, 2021), the concept of sacred heritage was brought to the international agenda within the scope of heritage diversity. In the same year, the Global Strategy for a

Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List that was accepted by the World Heritage Committee (WHC), which also drew attention to the importance of building awareness about sacred heritage.

The Australia ICOMOS International Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance-The Burra Charter, created in 1979, defines the cultural significance of the place or space in conservation actions. With the 1999 amendments to the Burra Statutes, the methodologies developed to address problems related to intangible qualities and the legitimate expectations of communities highlighted the aesthetic, historical, scientific, social, and "cultural significance of spiritual values" for the past, present and future generations and the meaning of the place itself, its order, use, associations, and attributed meanings (ICOMOS, 1999). These developments helped to facilitate recognition of the concept of sacred heritage through renewed expansion of the concept of cultural heritage.

Sacred Values in the Scope of Changes to the Concept of Cultural Heritage in the 2000s

The WHC opened the category of renewed cultural heritage, prepared by ICOMOS in 2000, for discussion by redefining it in 2002 within the scope of cultural heritage, protection methods, tools, and components. In 2004, these categories were identified according to three complementary analysis frameworks: Typological Framework: cultural heritage categories, Chronological - Regional Framework: classification of cultural heritage according to its relations with time and space, and Thematic Framework: thematic areas (ICOMOS, 2004).

Through the analyses performed within these frameworks between 2002-2004, gaps and ambiguities in the WHL and inequalities in the representation of themes and countries were identified to develop a fairer and more balanced WHL (ICOMOS, 2004). Sacred values and places were defined as a type of heritage for the first time in all these complementary frameworks and were cited as common heritage in The World Heritage List-Filling The Gaps: An Action Plan For The Future (2004). Within the context of the Typological Framework, direct references are made to sacred heritage, as seen in the use of terms like religious properties, pilgrimage routes (within the context of cultural routes), burial monuments and sites, and the space of symbolic properties and memorials. The Chronological - Regional Framework focuses on the existence of sacred structures architecture and sacred cities present in various geographies since the existence of humanity. In the Thematic Framework, sacred places are associated with the theme of spiritual responses (religions), and sacred heritage, as shaped by belief systems and cultural structure, is also accepted as a manifestation of the way societies express themselves (ICOMOS, 2004). In the same year, the inclusion to the WHL of the "Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range-Japan" belonging to Shintoism and Buddhism, which testifies to the change and development of East Asian religions, is proof that sacred values are now recognized as heritage (WHL, 2022-d).

The importance of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention was emphasized with the addition of Community to the WHC's 4C (Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-

¹ The first sacred structures to be included on the WHL were the Aachen Cathedral in Germany and the Rock-Hewn churches in Ethiopia. Aachen Cathedral was registered for being a prototype or an archetype of outstanding artistic creation and inspiring religious architecture and for being a spiritual and political symbol of the unification of the Western world (WHL, 2022-a). The Rock-Hewn Churches, consisting of 11 churches, are protected for their representation of unparalleled

artistic achievement, for being a replacement symbol of the holy places of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and for their influence on Ethiopian Christianity (WHL, 2022-b). In 1981, the Old City of Jerusalem was the first city-scale sanctuary that was not named or documented as sacred to be included on the list for its impact on the development of religious architecture, and for its traces and testaments of many civilizations from prehistoric times to the present (WHL, 2022-c).

Building, Communication) objectives defined by The Budapest Declaration (2002). These objectives served as a guide in securing the equal representation of all faith groups and values, and the promotion of their sacred values (UNESCO, 2007).

With these developments, the scope of cultural heritage was expanded with the inclusion of intangible cultural values. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was first enacted in 2003, and in 2008, the creation of a separate registration list for these values (Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity) was started. In this list, intangible inheritance included applications, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, tools, objects, and cultural areas. Together with these elements, the meaning of the place, religious accumulations, rituals, and symbols are what make cities sacred. In 2008, the Mevlevi Sema Ceremony (Türkiye), the Carnival of Oruro (Bolivia), the Cultural space of the Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit of the Congos of Villa Mella (Dominican Republic), the Ifa divination system (Nigeria), the Mystery play of Elche (Spain), and the Indigenous festival dedicated to the dead (Mexico) were the first intangible sacred values to be added to the WHL (UNESCO, 2003; UNESCO, 2022).

The ICOMOS - Xi'an Declaration (2005) draws attention to the physical, visual, natural, and spiritual aspects of heritage sites, their traditions and body of knowledge, and the preservation of different abstract forms and expressions (ICOMOS, 2005). With the Faro Convention (Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society) established in the same year (2005), protection methods involving egalitarian and peaceful approaches were developed. The participation of different cultures and societies with the same belief system in conservation processes was defined as a necessity for multi-layered sacred cities (Council of Europe, 2005).

According to the ICOMOS- Brazil, Declaration of Foz Do Iguaçu (2008) (ICOMOS-Brazil, 2008), the preservation of concrete and intangible values involves the protection of the communities that make up the cultural and historical places and their identities. In the same year (2008) the spirit of place (genius loci) concept was added to the values attributed to the place with the Quebec Declaration. In Roman mythology, this concept referred to a guardian spirit (such as a sacred mountain or tree) identified with the earth, while today, it refers to “the unique atmosphere of the place” formed by the integrity of material and spiritual qualities, historical past, and living culture (Uçar & Rifaioğlu, 2011). The spirit of place varies according to time and culture, with reference to the constant reconstruction process involving tangible (buildings, landscapes, routes, objects etc.) and intangible (memories, narratives, festivals, rituals, traditions, etc.) elements. In addition, the place may have more than one spirit, and stakeholders may apply different definitions to the spirit of place (ICOMOS, 2008). Having been shaped by various cultures and beliefs, namely the spirit, and in different historical periods, sacred cities have rich and multi-layered symbolic values.

According to ICOMOS-The Valletta Principles (2011), it is necessary to protect the cultural heritage, integrate it with today's social, economic, and cultural life, and respect the quality of life of the urbanites (ICOMOS, 2011). Based on these principles, tangible heritage values should be defined in line with the factors that contribute to the cultural elements, diversity, spirit, and identity of the place. In this way the city's sacred character can be preserved.

The heritage value of sacred places has gained legitimacy with the "values-based heritage management" approach envisaged by the changes in the Burra Regulation of 2013 (ICOMOS, 2013). The necessity of establishing strong relations with local people and stakeholders in the protection of cultural heritage was once again brought to the agenda with the Buenos Aires Declaration (2018), which was adopted in recognition of the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ICOMOS, 2018). The declaration serves as a guide for increasing the role of citizens and members of different faiths in the sustainability of sacred cities. However, the criteria for defining sacred cities and guidelines on heritage management have not yet been developed.

Sacredness, Divinity, and Sacred City

The common essence of all polytheistic and monotheistic religions and belief systems that emerged with the existence of humanity is the belief in a divine being or power. The objects, time(s), people, situations, and places to which a sense of sacredness has been attached have served as the means for connecting with the divine power. This study seeks to explain this phenomenon by looking at a selection of sacred cities, as defined by criteria involving the concepts of sacredness, divinity, and sacred space.

Sacredness, Divinity, and Sacred Space

The concept of "sacred" in religious texts and philosophical approaches is defined as religious, inaccessible, inviolable, untouchable, venerable, divine, devotional, and an element of worship. "Worshiped... the subject of religious reverence, of that which is close to or belonging to God" (Hançerlioğlu, 2018) is "the opposite of the unholy, that is, the profane and is a phenomenon that is extraordinary and impressive, in differentiation from the ordinary and ineffective" (Gündüz, 2009). The sacred, in its absolute good sense, is the basis of the feeling of being created by being in harmony with the mysterious in its essence (Otto, 2014). Sacred heritage, replete with the frightening and alluring fiction of the sacred, has been referred to as "the whole of phenomena and events that God points to, that people consider sacred, that witness and contribute to the development of humanity, and that are expressed by tangible and intangible cultural values and religious symbols" (Hafiz, 2012). In this sense, space embodies religious values, as well as social, cultural, economic, and political factors, behind its perceived concrete form, and thus, it is a phenomenon loaded with symbolic meaning. The main element sanctifying this space is the means by which it connects to the sacred.

As a result of the desire to gain religious experience and to reach the sacred, sanctuaries and houses of God(s) are constructed and religious events are repeated through worship and rituals. Thus, sacred places are defined not only by their tangible (physical) characteristics but also by their religious symbols. The main issue at stake in the production of the sacred space, which involves various factors, such as the period and geography, religion and belief traditions and local culture, and its place in the history of religion, is the meaning, perceptions, and interpretations that the believers ascribe to the place and the values they define the place with. This situation has been expressed as "the process of re-interpreting and reproducing the absolute geographical space within the framework of beliefs and values", which reveals the distinction between ordinary space and sacred space (Çetin et al., 2017).

Sacredness starts with the “home” in space. According to Bachelard (1957/2018), the home in the poetics of space is “a symbol of power, it protects people from the outside world, its structural characteristics evoke the relationship between God and human, and it solidifies concepts like time and memory through space, as it is at the core of every space”. The idea of home, which extends from the roof to the cellar (the cellar and roof extend in two different directions, where the home is a space of interiority with its isolation from the outside world, and the cellar represents irrationality and fears, while the roof clarifies thoughts by being bright and open) points to the essence of sacredness and the meaning it holds. With this approach, it can be said that all structures related to sacredness bring God and man (two different axes) together. Temples, spaces that serve to unite God and man and represent the distinction between the sacred and the profane, have been instrumental in the formation, development, and continuity of settlements since the Neolithic period, when people first transitioned to settled life (Ok, 2015). Temples are places where a supreme being is worshiped, where religious rituals and worship are carried out, where sacred ceremonies are held, and where religious power is embodied through space. Temples are distinguished from other structures with the attribution of sacredness and can differ by their architectural forms and religious motifs, but they show similarities amongst themselves in terms of their location at the center of the settlements, their functions, and their use of sacred symbols.

Erzen (2019) describes the first examples of temples as structures designed for the purpose of furnishing a place to ask for forgiveness and to thank the gods after a good harvest. With their location at the highest point and/or geometric center of the city, allowing everybody easy access (Can, 2014), the temples served to bless cities and were the visual focal point. This arrangement continued in monotheistic religions as well. As the examples below will show, cities were elevated to the level of sanctity with their temples. The Hebrews displayed the sanctity of the city by calling the Old City of Jerusalem (Jerusalem) Beth Makdeşe or Beth HaMikdaş (in Islamic sources, the name of the city is Bayt al-Maqdis, home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque) in reference to the temple of Solomon (Ağırakça, 2009). In the Christian-Catholic church, the temples and places attributed to the name of Mary, the mother of God and the most exalted saint, are sacred, and pilgrimage sites where forgiveness of sins (such as Ephesus-Virgin Mary’s House/Church) (Küçük, 2018). The Vatican City was sanctified and became a place of pilgrimage on account of St. Peter’s tomb on the Vatican Hill and its surrounding churches; the first bishop and pope of Christianity, the apostle Peter, who was active in the formation of the Christian church, was martyred at this site (64-67 AD) (Şakiroğlu, 2012).

Sacred Cities and Definition Criteria

In the monotheistic religions, sacred cities were created in places associated with a sacred event and/or person or in places referred to in religious texts. Today, however, the sacred values of these cities, which are included on the WHL with their cultural characteristics, can be called into question.

Sacred cities differ from other cities in terms of religion and belief systems and their continuity, settlement tradition and architecture, sacred values, the expression of sacredness, the manifestation of the sacred, and sacred motifs, such as symbols. However, each sacred city needs to be defined and evaluated based on its unique qualities. According to the conceptual framework governed by the concepts of sacredness, divinity,

sacred heritage, and belief systems’ use of space (such as religious functions, forms of worship) and the meanings they attribute to the space, the criteria for defining sacred cities can be determined through their common sacred qualities (Table 1).

Manifestation of the sacred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Divine signs, God’s appearance (theophany) or power (manifestation) - Being pointed out by God - Being associated with a sacred being, person, object, time, or event - Mentioned in sacred texts, legends, narratives, mythological stories - The construction of space for God or a divine being - Witnessed the life of religious figures or religious events
The manifestation of the sacred in the built or natural environment- the embodiment of the sacred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The existence of a sacred center; shaping the layout of a sacred building or natural area - Interaction of sacred natural environment and sacred architecture
Tangible-physical (denotation-first level in semiotics) and intangible (connotation-second level in semiotics) religious signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The direction of the sacred place, its location, its relationship with other sacred structures, etc. - Geometrical forms in architecture related to religion or religious teachings - The orientation of sacred objects to each other in the sacred structure - Religious motifs that shape the architecture (color, proportion, light, holy number, etc.)
Belief system-related functions, ways of experiencing the sacred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forms and places of worship and religious rituals - Visiting phenomenon - Pilgrimage route or destination
Relationship with the history of religion (person, event, etc. in the history of religion and the perception of sanctity in the space)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Witnessed the emergence and development of religion - Witnessed the dissemination of religious teachings or the compilation of religious knowledge - Witnessed the events that shaped the history of religion
Indicators of the value(s) of the belief system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interaction of local culture and religious values - Meaning and sense of ownership attributed by members of religion or belief

Examples of Sacred Cities in Living Monotheistic Religions

Monotheistic (divine/Abrahamic) religions are religions sent by God (Allah) through prophets. They start with Adam and end with the Prophet Muhammad. In the limited framework of this study, the sacred values associated with the city of Jerusalem in Judaism, the city of Santiago de Compostela in Christianity, and the city of Mecca in Islam, where sacred architecture directed the development of the cities, were examined. The selected cities are all pilgrimage places of today’s monotheistic religions, whose religious and cultural values have survived to the present.

Pilgrimage, which conceptually means movement away from home, is a spiritual journey involving travel to a sacred place to connect with the divine being, where the deciding factor in the choice to go on a pilgrimage is mobility. With pilgrimage rituals being performed at a sacred time (such as holidays) through a common orientation of individual purification and a return to one's essence, value was placed on cities thought to be blessed, and as a result, these cities underwent constant development and grew in stature (Geçicioğlu, 2010).

The Sacred City of Judaism: Jerusalem

Manifestation of the sacred: The sanctity of the city, which is sacred to all three monotheistic religions, is based on the patriarch Abraham, who is considered the founding father of monotheistic religions. Many factors contribute to the sanctity of the city of Jerusalem in Judaism, including the facts that the city is the symbol of Jewish history and is considered the only legitimate place where pilgrimage and sacrifice can be performed, the ruins of the Wailing Wall/Western Wall to the west of the wall remaining from the Temple of Solomon are places of worship, the city was given as the promised land by Yahweh (i.e., the belief that the Palestine-centered geography was given to the Israelites) according to the Talmud (scripture of the Jewish oral tradition), prayers are performed towards the direction of the temple in the city, and it is accepted as qibla for synagogues (Batuk & Mert, 2017; Aydın, 2019).

Sacredness in the Built and Natural Environment: The Temple Mount (Mount Moriah) situated within the walls of Jerusalem's Old City is the sacred center of the settlement and has determined its development. Temples associated with different belief systems from the time of the first formation of the city to the present, like Solomon's Temple (1000 B.C.), which was reconstructed in 515 B.C., Herod's Temple (63 B.C.), Jupiter's Temple (136 A.D.), and the Al-Aqsa Mosque (638 A.D.), were built on this site (Mert, 2017). Today, the Wailing Wall, which the Jews believe to be part of Solomon's Temple, the Orthodox Christian Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the Via Dolorosa (The Way of Grief), the Dome of the Rock, and the Muslim Al Aqsa Mosque are the structures that confer sanctity on the Temple Mount site (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Images, from left to right, of the Dome of the Rock, the Wailing Wall, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (WHL, 2022-c)

Religious-Sacred Signs: The Al-Aqsa Mosque is considered sacred by Jews and Muslims alike, as Jews identify it as Solomon's Temple and Muslims, as the first qibla, the sacred rock where the Prophet Muhammad ascended² and as the first monumental structure of the Islamic religion, with its Kubbetü's Sahara (the dome covering the rock) (688 AD). Today, the Al-Aqsa Mosque is held as a sacred symbol of Jerusalem, the "City of Friendship", for the three major monotheistic faiths (Judaism-Jerusalem, Christiani-ty-Jerusalem, Islam-Darussalam) (Üğurluel, 2021).

The most important sacred sign in Jerusalem for the Jews is

² The Jews believe that the footprints on the rock belonged to Prophet Idris, and that he ascended to heaven here; the Christians believe that the footprints

the Wailing Wall. After the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 586 BC and the exile of the Jews to Babylon, the temple was rebuilt in 515 BC. The temple was again destroyed in 70 AD, and the Jews, who were dispersed throughout the world, did not build cities in the diaspora outside the promised land but performed their worship in synagogues facing Jerusalem (Harman, 2001; Eren & Kaçak, 2017; Aydın, 2019). The Jewish diaspora adopted a book-centered religion and a single temple understanding and lived as minorities in ghettos of their host countries, a turn of events that led to Jerusalem becoming a political and religious center (Aykit & Yetim, 2019). Out of these circumstances, Jerusalem became the symbol of the longed-for sacredness and their past lives in the promised land (Aydın, 2018).

Ways of Experiencing the Sacred: Located on the Temple Mount, The Wailing Wall is a place of worship and visitation. As there is no longer a temple in Jerusalem where pilgrimage and sacrificial worship can be performed, ritualistic sacrifices are not performed.

Jerusalem in Terms of the History of Religions: In Judaism, Solomon's Temple held a common central function for the Jewish people (Yemenlioğlu, 2020). The city is directly related to the history of Judaism, as clearly seen in its historical development: the First Temple Period (1000-586 BC) started with the construction of the temple by Prophet Solomon, the city served as the focal point of political and religious centralization, the Ten Commandments of the Prophet Moses were preserved in the temple (Aykit & Yetim, 2019), the Second Temple Period started with the second construction of the temple after it was destroyed by the Babylonian Empire in 586 BC (515 BC-70 AD), and the diaspora process began following the exile of the Jews after the temple was demolished again in 70 AD. The city is also sacred to Christians, as it is where Jesus Christ spent a lot of his time, where the spread of Christianity and the formation of Christian theology took place, and where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, built on the tomb of Jesus Christ, lies. In terms of Islamic history, the city is sacred because it is known as the holy land in the Qur'an and the site of Muhammad's ascension (ascension from earth to the supernatural realm) (Güngör, 2020; Mert, 2017; Hasanoğlu, 2015).

Indicators of the Value(s) of the Belief System: The city was historically positioned on the Temple Mount (Al-Aqsa Mosque), a holy site for Judaism and later Christianity and Islam. The sanctity of the city is explained using the metaphor of "Heavenly Jerusalem" (Batuk & Mert, 2017). For Jews, the meaning and symbolic values of the city exceed its spatial-structural importance. The fact that all Jews have a sense of belonging to the city stems from the hope of those living in exile to live freely once again in their homeland.

The Sacred City of Christianity: Santiago de Compostela

Manifestation of the Sacred: According to Christian belief, after Saint James (Jacob/Spanish Santiago), one of the apostles of Jesus, was executed in Jerusalem in 44 AD, he was brought to Spain by two of his students and buried there. After his grave was discovered by a monk in the 9th century, at what today is the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, (Peelen & Jansen, 2007), the city adopted St James as its patron saint. The manuscript, "Liber Sancti Jacobi Codex Calixtinus", written in the middle of the 12th century, features illustrations of pilgrims and forms of worship practiced by St James, which paved the way for the city

belonged to Jesus; and the Muslims believe that the footprints belonged to the Prophet Muhammad and that he ascended to heaven from this rock (Üğurluel, 2021).

to be a place of pilgrimage (European Federation of Saint James Way, 2022-a).

Sacredness in the Built and Natural Environment: The Romanesque and Baroque style cathedral, built on the tomb of St. James in the 11th century, embodies sanctity in the eyes of Christians and serves as the symbol of the city. It attracted Christians from different countries and nationalities and played a decisive role in the development of architecture and art in Galicia and the Iberian Peninsula (Figure 2) (WHL, 2022-e). The sanctification of the city has continued with the addition of other sacred buildings dedicated to St James in the city center (The Monastery, the Church of San Paio de Antealtares etc.) and museums housing pilgrimage items and sacred art (Museum of Pilgrimage, Holy Land Museum, Sacred Art Museum etc.), as well as with pilgrimage routes through Spain and France and the celebration of sacred years the city hosts³ (Gonzalez et al., 2016; European Federation of Saint James Way, 2022-a). To the west of the Old City (Zona Vella), where the cathedral is located, the existing religious buildings (San Domingos de Bonaval Park⁴ on the old cemetery of the Dominican monastery, Old Chapel Santa Susana, and Capela Do Pilar Church in Alameda Park), fit seamlessly into the natural and built environment.

The Routes of Santiago de Compostela were created as Pilgrimage Routes by those who came to the city for pilgrimage from various European countries. Among these routes, the "Camino Frances and Routes of North Spain" were the first cultural routes accepted by the WHC. The Spanish routes were registered in 1993 and the French in 1998 (WHL, 2022-f). The last point on the route, which passes through 9 countries, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and Spain, is the cathedral in the city (European Federation of Saint James Way, 2022-b).

During the reign of General Franco (1982-1975), who ruled Spain after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the monuments on the pilgrimage route were restored (1939-1959). In the 1960s, the pilgrimage route turned into a touristic route with the expansion of the airport, the increase in accommodation facilities, and tourism promotional campaigns. Signs were added on the pilgrimage route in the Holy Year of 1965. Between 1960 and 1975, films were prepared promoting the spiritual and touristic value of the pilgrimage route (Gonzalez et al., 2016). The image of the holy city was strengthened with these interventions. The city, which has been developing on the axis of faith and cultural tourism since the 20th century, has been under the protection of the Consortium of the Santiago de Compostela (partnership of national, regional, and local public administrations with the archdiocese and university) since 1991 (WHL, 2022-e).



Figure 2. Santiago de Compostela Cathedral (WHL, 2022-e)

³ Years when the 25th of July falls on the Sunday of the Feast of Saint James are considered Holy Years. The last Holy Year was 2021, and the next will be in 2027 (Santos & Cabrera, 2014. p. 719).

⁴ This park serves as a natural entrance to the city for pilgrims traveling the French and the North Road. In 1994, architect Álvaro Siza designed the holy hill that dominates the city as a park to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims and visitors, and over time, it began to be referred to as a sacred space. The main access

Religious-Sacred Signs: With the end of the sovereignty of the Andalusian State (711-1031) in Spain, the city became a religious and political symbol in the wake of its complete Christianization in the 15th century. Today, the city evokes an image of a city in the medieval Christian Western world⁵ and stands as a symbol of the struggle between Christian Europe and Islam (Gomez-Montero, 2001).

Ways of Experiencing the Sacred: According to Slavin (2003), walking the city pilgrimage route to the tomb of St James represents an inner journey. Pilgrims, especially contemporary pilgrims who travel alone on this journey, turn inwards to experience spiritual and social enlightenment and physical and mental purification (Slavin, 2003).

The City of Santiago de Compostela and its Place in the History of Religions: After the discovery of his tomb, St. James became a patron saint of Spain, and heroic tales about him spread (Peelen & Jansen, 2007), which resulted in the attribution of religious importance to the city. The city witnessed many key religious events throughout its history, including the power and influence of the Christian faith in Europe in the Middle Ages, the religious wars between Christians and Muslims in Spain, and the "Reconquista" movement (reclaiming Andalusia from the Muslims) (Gomez-Montero, 2001; Peelen & Jansen, 2007).

Indicators of the Value(s) of the Belief System: The key indicators of the belief system in the city are St. James' tomb and places of worship, such as monasteries and churches (San Paio de Antealtares Cathedral Church etc.), museums devoted to pilgrimage and sacred art (Cathedral Museum, Museum of Pilgrimage etc.), and depictions of saints on the facades of churches and monasteries (San Martino Pinario Church - Depiction of St. Martin sharing his cloak with a poor man).

The Sacred City of Islam: Mecca

Manifestation of the Sacred: The city of Mecca, where Islam was born and spread, has been the center of the religion since the 7th century. Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, was born in Mecca (570) and spent most of his life (570-632) there. In 610, the holy book, the Quran, started to be conveyed to him, and he assumed the mantle of prophet. He began his religious teachings in 613, and in 632, when he performed his last pilgrimage to Mecca, he read the Farewell Sermon (his will).

Sacredness in the Built and Natural Environment: The city is surrounded by Ebu Kubays on Safâ and Merve hills to the east, Kuaykian to the west, Sevr to the southwest, and Hira (Nur) and the Sebir mountains to the northeast, in the Bekke (Batnimekke) valley. Everything in Mecca is oriented to the Kaaba (Figure 3). The foundations of the Kaaba, which was built by the first person, Adam, but destroyed by Noah's Flood, were discovered and rebuilt by the Prophet Abraham by order of Allah. The area on which the Kaaba lies is called Baytullah (House of Allah), because it is the only piece of land that Allah has reserved for himself on earth (Uğurluel, 2018). Muslims orient their prayers according to the qibla, i.e., the direction towards the Kaaba, which is believed by Muslims to be the first house built on earth, and which is surrounded by the Masjid al-Haram, meaning "the mosque

to the park is between the two museums, at the start of the Rua de San Pedro, next to the Puerta del Camino (Testa, 1984. p. 29.)

⁵ The main institutions that defined medieval western cities politically, economically, religiously, legally, and socially were castles, the market place, the church or cathedral, the courthouse, and the guild, respectively. The church was primarily responsible for shaping the settlement pattern of medieval western cities (Tekkanat & Türkmen, 2018. p. 115).

surrounding the Kaaba⁶ (Can, 2014). Masjid al-Haram, which is a sacred complex, includes the Kaaba at the center, Hacerül-Esved, the black stone that is believed to have been sent from heaven and first found on Ebu Kubeys Hill by the Prophet Abraham and that now lies inside the Kaaba to indicate the starting and ending point of the circumambulation performed around the Kaaba seven times⁷ (this movement represents the agreement to be a part of the cosmic order around which everything revolves around something else in a certain order) (Öğüt, 2011), the stone, Maqam-i İbrahim, on which the Prophet Abraham ascended to invite people to pilgrimage and which bears his footprints, the Well of Zamzam, which was found by Hazrat Hacer (wife of Prophet Abraham) while searching for water for her son⁸, Prophet Ismail, the corridor called Mes'a, located between the hills of Safa and Merve, where the sa'y worship is performed by walking it 7 times, just as Hacer did when she ran to find water for her son, and other sacred places (Uğurluel, 2018).



Figure 3. Masjid al-Haram and the Kaaba (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022)

Religious-Sacred Signs: The city of Mecca is a religious symbol. The Islamic temples face Mecca, Muslim people turn towards the Kaaba while praying, it the house of Allah, a form of the heavenly mosque on earth, and it is the center of the world in the Islamic religious tradition. The Kaaba, which sanctifies Mecca, comes from the root ka'b, which means square or cube-shaped (Ünal, 2001). The Kaaba's cube form, which is considered the most ideal form, symbolizes eternity and the balance that emerges from change and movement (Örenç, 2013). With the symbolic value it holds, the Kaaba is an important sacred place (Peker, 1996).

Arafat Mountain, which is visited by pilgrims after the morning prayer on the day of Eid-al-Adha, came to symbolize pilgrimage with the words of the Prophet Muhammad, "Hajj is Arafat"⁹. In Islam, Mount Arafat is the mountain where Adam and Eve met after their separation, and where Gabriel spoke to Prophet Abraham. The Cave of Hira (on Mount Hira, northeast of Mecca), where the Prophet Muhammad's first revelation and prophetic mission were conveyed to him (Asımgil, 2008), and the Cave of Sèvres, where the Prophet Muhammad hid during his migration to

Medina with the Muslims of Mecca in 622 (Demircan, 2009), are natural areas that are accepted as symbols of Islamic religious history.

Ways of Experiencing the Sacred: Mecca is the center of the religion of Islam, as it is the site of pilgrimage, visitation, and worship. The sacred nature of the city is tied in part to the pilgrimage. During the pilgrimage, Muslims walk around the Kaaba to symbolize the rotation of the world, they approach Allah when coming down from Arafat on the day of Eid-al-Adha, they recreate the stoning of the devil, who tried to prevent Abraham from sacrificing his son Ismail to Allah at Muzdalifah, located between Arafat and Mina, and they perform the ceremonial worship of "sa'y", which symbolizes Hazrat Hacer's search for water (Bozkurt & Küçükaşçı, 2003; Asımgil, 2008).

Mecca and its place in the History of Religions: The spread of religion through the caliphs (632-661) after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the clearing of the Kaaba, where idols were kept by pagans before Islam, and the city reaching the present day as the sacred place of the religion of Islam are the fundamental elements that point to the importance of Mecca in terms of Islamic religious history. Since the time of its inception as a sacred city, Mecca has been governed by various empires, from the Umayyads (661-750), the Abbasids (750-1258), and the Mamluks (1259-1517) to the Ottomans (1517-1916), the Hejaz Emirate (1916-1924), and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1924-present), and the city continues to witness the history of Islamic religion.

Indicators of the Value(s) of the Belief System: With only Muslims being able to enter the area called Harem, where pilgrimages and worship are carried out, Mecca developed in a way that was closed to the influence of different religions. The city has been shaped according to the local culture and the Islamic religion's understanding of urban life (the positioning of holy places according to the belief of being one and the same, the concept of privacy, and the surrounding of living spaces by courtyards, etc.). The fact that the pilgrimage can only be performed in Mecca, the center of Islam, a sense of belonging is felt by the believers, who identify the city with the Prophet Muhammad and other religious figures. Pilgrimage in the Islamic faith confers great value on the worship performed as a congregation and is important insofar as being an individual spiritual journey and bringing together people from different geographies and nations who share the same religion.

Conclusion

Sacred cities, which can be distinguished from secular cities by their sacred, tangible and intangible symbols, have an important place in monotheistic religions due to their associations with eschatological events (beliefs about places of return to the divine world or places where after-death rendezvous will take place).

In the wake of COVID-19 being declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, worship,

⁶ Harem (Haram) means forbidden, protected, and inviolable. Mecca and its surroundings, where the Kaaba, believed to be the house of Allah, is located, is called the Harem, a safe place protected from all kinds of evil, and only Muslims are allowed to enter this area.

⁷ In the number symbolism found in mythology and holy books, it is believed that the number seven, which combines the number three, a number considered sacred, and the number four, a number representing being, holds significant meaning (Öz, 2009. p. 241; Kılıç & Eser, 2016. p. 95). In Islamic belief, circumambulation and sa'y acts are performed in seven complete rounds to represent the seven levels of heavens.

⁸ In Islamic sources, the emigration from the homelands of Hz. Ismail and his mother Hacer are described differently than it is in the Torah. In the Qur'an, it is stated that he migrated directly from Ken'an to Mecca, unlike in the Torah, which states a different emigration route. In the story where Hacer is searching for water (zamzam water) in the desert, the Torah states that this took place in Beer-sheba, whereas the hadiths tell that this took place in Mecca and narrate the story in great detail, including dialogues (Ata, 2013. p. 376).

⁹ During the pilgrimage, which is one of the five pillars of Islam, one must stop at Arafat. Failure to stop there means that the pilgrimage will not be accepted (Boks, 1991. p. 261).

visits, pilgrimages, and religious rituals performed in sacred cities for the purpose of experiencing the sacred were relegated to the virtual world (the Kaaba was closed to visitors, the Jews were not able to visit Jerusalem on Passover, Christians were not able to visit Jerusalem on Easter, and the 2021 holy year events in Santiago de Compostela were cancelled, etc.).

Especially in monotheistic religions, where collective worship is important, sacred cities are in danger of foregoing their missions due to the closure of temples, entry restrictions, reduced human mobility (save for essential services) and restrictions on education, social relations, and religious functions. Thus, after the pandemic, sacred cities conservation and management processes should be immediately rescheduled according to the criteria defining which envisaged by this study, of sacred cities in terms of the changing perception of space, the use of space and religious behavior-actions.

Moreover, with the developments in the sustainability process of cultural heritage and ICOMOS's call for sacred-space and sacred heritage in 2022 (ICOMOS, 2022), which raises awareness by opening the idea of preserving heritage to discussions through new approaches under different themes every year, sacred cities should be defined by their sacred values and included in the WHC's cultural heritage definitions and operational practice guides.

Lastly, national conservation legislation of not only in the countries where the holy cities examined in this study are located, but also in all countries should be reconsidered based on global-scale studies on protecting and describing and analyzing sacred cities studies, any deficiencies or inadequacies regarding the diversity of heritage should be eliminated.

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