

"Inventing the city view: the case of Nabi Samwil and the view of the Jerusalem"

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The holy site of Nabi Samwil, a few kilometers to the north of the Old City of Jerusalem, is a fascinating case-study of shared and changing religious space. This paper will consider the role of vision, and ideas of attention in the landscape and viewing-as-power, to chart how Nabi Samwil has been used as an 'ideal' viewpoint for the city of Jerusalem. Using medieval pilgrims' account of the site, I will explore the politics of the holy vista, and chart a history of the city view which begins with the idealised perspectives developed in the Middle Ages at Nabi Samwil. The paper will close with a brief consideration of the status of Nabi Samwil today and its new deployments within conflicting scopic regimes. In this account, this city is constructed through acts of devout sight, which can occlude as much as they reveal.