Sacred Mountains (2017)
Abrahamic Religions and Musical Practices in the Mediterranean Area

by Nicola Scaldaferrri

An audiovisual journey across Abrahamic religious and musical practices.

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Religious pilgrimages to sacred mountains include three key moments:
1. Ascent to the top: the point of contact with Heaven.
2. Prayer on the mountain: an occasion for festive and sacrificial practices.
3. Descent from the top: return to the valley in the gladness of divine grace.

1. The ascent
The small community of Israelite Samaritans lives today between Israel and the Palestinian Territories. They base their cult on a strict respect of the Books of Moses, the only books they recognize as sacred.
Fifty days after Passover, on the occasion of Shavuot, the Samaritan community goes to pray on Mount Gerizim in the West Bank, where their sacred places are located.

2. The feast
The Islamic brotherhood of the Bektashi—a Sufi branch whose practices presents elements of religious syncretism—was founded in the thirteenth century in Anatolia, and today has its center in Albania.
Each year, on August 20-25, members of the brotherhood climb Mount Tomorr, where they pray near the tombs of dede, and practice the kurban: the killing of a sheep whose meat is then consumed by each family.

3. The descent
The cult of the Black Madonna of Viggiano, Queen of Lucania, is among the most important in Southern Italy since the fourteenth century, when the miraculous statue was discovered on the Holy Mountain, and a sanctuary was built.
Every year in early September, the miraculous statue "descends" into the village for a festival. It will be kept there until the following spring, only to be carried back into the mountains.