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Maps and Meaning: Reading the Map of the Holy Land

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Abstract

The research methods of hermeneutics and semiotics were used to analyze maps of the Holy Land. The main conclusion of this study is how those methods could help us to read and understand maps. Other issues of concern are which religious elements actually appear and their form of representation in the range of maps. Narratives identified on the various maps were the holy Christian narrative- which proved the most dominant, the Jewish narrative and the Muslim narrative that was rarely found in the maps, even in those with a Palestinian narrative. A ubiquitous finding was disregarded for political issues, although the maps' messages allow the map-user to draw conclusions about ideology, images, and conflicts.

Keywords

Hermeneutics, Semiotics, Narrative, Maps, and Holy Land

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Maps and Meaning: Reading the Map of the Holy Land

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The research methods of hermeneutics and semiotics were used to analyse maps of the Holy Land. The main conclusion of this study is how those methods could help us to read and understand maps. Other issues of concern are which religious elements actually appear and their form of representation in the range of maps. Narratives identified on the various maps were the “holy Christian” narrative- which proved the most dominant, the Jewish narrative and the Muslim narrative that was rarely found in the maps, even in those with a “Palestinian” narrative. A ubiquitous finding was disregarded for political issues, although the maps’ messages allow the map-user to draw conclusions about ideology, images, and conflicts. Key Words: Hermeneutics, Semiotics, Narrative, Maps, and Holy Land

Introduction

The study reported here focused on the reading of current maps of the Holy Land as part of a broader research project on reading maps. The subject of the broader research was Israel’s maps, their meaning, nature, and narratives. This treatise examines 101 maps of Israel published in Israel and elsewhere during the past 20 years. The main research goal was to interpret the maps as text and to describe, characterize, and analyze the narratives of maps. Other research goals were to recognize and analyze the messages, myths, and images conveyed by these maps and to identify the relationship between the maps’ narratives and their political, social, and cultural context in Israel. The survey was done using the semiotic method, while the main innovation of the research is in its approach to the maps of Israel as a readable text. One hundred and one maps of Israel published in Israel, the Palestinian National Authority, and other countries were examined. The research project elicited narratives about Israel and the Palestinian Authority, although it was generally centred on Israel as the focus of the Holy Land. The study principally sought information about the impressions that can be derived from the different maps by qualitative methods and the narratives that can be construed from this representation.

Geography is increasingly looking to qualitative approaches to address important questions. In the recent decade some organizations such as the Association of American Geographers’ (AAG, 2005) Qualitative Research and Geography Specialty Group (<http://www.geog.buffalo.edu/~mcope/QRSG.html>) have been promoting the use and understanding of qualitative research approaches, methods, and tools for purposes of education, research, and public service in the discipline of geography. Qualitative research methods in human geography are also explained in the book of the same name

(*Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*) edited by Hay (2000). This book provides concise and accessible guidance on the conduct of qualitative research, while dealing with methods such as interviewing, focus group, observations and participating observations, and reading texts. In the past decade an effort has been made to bridge the perceived gap between quantitative and qualitative research through dialogue, debate, and establishment of common ground for the purpose of enhancing rigorous research across the spectrum.

Hermeneutics and Semiotics

This research is based on the inquiry field of hermeneutics, namely the theory or philosophy of giving meaning to subjects by interpreting them, and semiotics, namely the "science of signs" whereby the cultural product is viewed as a text (Chandler, 2002). The goal of hermeneutic research is to understand and interpret texts on the assumption that some hidden meanings exist that are to be uncovered (Daragis & Sabar-Ben-Yehoshua, 2001). Within hermeneutics, methods of interpretation are philology and criticism. Philology makes heavy demands on the act of interpreting texts: Is the text the one it claims to be? Is the ascribed authorship correct? Has the text fulfilled the role it claims to have filled? Is it a coherent whole? What does the text say about its own world? What does the text mean now? What is the relationship between the meaning of a text and the author's intention in creating it? The philological concern thus corresponds to a lower hermeneutics while higher hermeneutics takes as its task the proper understanding of the meaning of a text; how is it related to its own world and how it is to be related to our present world.

Berger (1984) defines semiotics as the system of sign analysis that focuses on the iconic, indexical, and symbolic attributes of sign. A sign is "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity": It is a central concept in semiology and it unifies a concept (Berger, p. 191). Researchers argue today that many cultural products, including maps, can be read as a text. Geographers have to relate to a map as the sociologists refer to a souvenir as: "a symbolic unit", an "object" in the tourism industry that reveals socio - political influences and interests. The maps should be read as a "text" which purports to show something and conveys specific messages, exactly as the sociologist treats the "art" as a text (Shenhav-Keller, 1993), which reflects political and social processes, interests, ideological forces, and power relations. This paper focuses on the Holy Land maps as a type of signs and as texts.

Daragis and Sabar-Ben-Yehoshua (2001) claim that everyone has his or her own assumptions and perceptions with which he or she interprets the world and different texts. The metaphor of the text came into being in the second half of the twentieth century as the template for understanding and framing social life; it has been used in the study of film, landscape, and art (Chandler, 2002; Duncan & Duncan, 1988; Duncan & Ley, 1993). This research hermeneutics proved to be the theory capable of addressing maps as texts: their origin, intended meaning, and received meaning.

One of the greatest problems of the hermeneutic theory is the absence of a clear-cut methodology. Of course a careful reading of the text is necessary with numerous meticulous re-readings (Daragis & Sabar-Ben-Yehoshua, 2001). This research regards the absence of a common and stable methodology as a challenging opportunity for innovation. In recent years attempts have been made to create a model that qualifies and

quantifies the differences between maps and photographs. Though such efforts have been presented at national and international gatherings, no set method is mentioned in the literature for examining a map in order to determine its qualitative uniqueness and presentation of concepts.

The hermeneutic method was chosen after a pre-research done in 1994, which investigated some aspects of the cartography of current Christian pilgrimage maps of the Holy Land, by using the research method of cartographic content analysis (Collins-Kreiner, 1997).

The method of content analysis that usually deals with the analysis of the text was transformed to analyse maps. Twenty-five main characteristics of the maps were assigned for analysis of the maps. These were grouped into three main categories, which differ from each other by what they symbolize and what they represent. The characteristics in each map were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively in the following way: (1) The appearance of the element on the map- the element would be given a mark based on whether or not it appears on the map: "0" indicating non - appearance and "1" indicating appearance and (2) the amount of distortion of the element on the map- marked: "1", "5", and "10" representing the extent of distortion of the element: "10" represents a large distortion and "1" represents a small distortion. The different cartographic distortions in pilgrimage maps were detected by this methodology.

One of the findings was that although a maximum attempt of objectivity was intended, the amount of distortion in the map was based on the writers' own subjective evaluation and could not be dealt solely by quantitative methods. Therefore, qualitative methods are required.

Maps and Meaning of Maps

Reading maps as narratives emerged as an important research field in the 1990s (Bar-Gal, 1996, 2003; Newman, 1991). The politics of map-making is another field that is beginning to attract significant interest. The power of maps in the formulation of foreign policy is reflected in the scale adopted, the semantics and naming of places, and the extent to which they are utilized as part of a wider process of cartographic propaganda and territorial socialization (Newman, 1999). Maps have played, and still play, a major role in politics, reflecting the potent ability of visual images and messages to represent and advance agendas (Black, 1997; Cohen, 1998). Maps are ideally suited to further the cause of nationalist movements, as shown by Herb (1997) in his book on the mapping of Germany between 1918 and 1945. Mapmaking and imperialism also intersect in the most basic manner because both are concerned with territory and knowledge (Edney, 1997).

However, treating maps as a means of communication does not assume that they are mirrors of reality. The communication model used by many cartographers, in which maps are objective tools for transmitting information, is flawed and riddled with contradictions (Pickles, 1992). It presumes that cartography is a neutral science, but the making of maps cannot be separated from the societal context in which it is conducted: Even the seemingly most accurate map is still a transformed and interpreted picture of reality. All the information that is represented had to be collected, classified, and encoded, a process that is structured by social norms and values, whether or not the

cartographer is aware of it (Herb, 1997). Pickles (1992) argued that maps have to be deconstructed and analyzed in their layers of textually; the cartographic image itself, the material it accompanies, and the larger social context.

Maps are representations of knowledge, and as such "they are constructed according to culturally defined semiotic codes....according to cultural expectations" (Edney, 1997, p. 338). Maps were always designed for a specific purpose. Nowadays, maps are highly functional in that they are designed, like a bridge or a house, for a certain purpose. Thus, each map distorts reality in one way or another. Wood (1993, p. 70) claimed that maps work by serving interests and "Every map shows this.... but not that". But because all maps distort, what is important is the intention behind the construction of the map and the use to which it is put (Pickles, 1992).

Maps are widely employed by a disparate array of organizations and causes, to sponsor products and ideas. Political parties include maps in campaign literature to try to sway voters, and in the case of Israel, presentation of the present and future boundaries play an important part in the propaganda of the major parties. The techniques used in maps that set out to persuade are well known. They include choice of map projection and scale, selection and omission of data, use of certain symbols and colours, and the message incorporated in the title and accompanying caption (Monmonier, 1991, 1993; Monmonier & Schnell, 1988).

Harley (1988, 1992) stated that studying the meaning of maps goes beyond the geographical and topographic features. It involves an interpretative approach of search for an alternative meaning, one hitherto neglected. Following Harley, this study assumes that maps are products of the culture in which they were created; hence they tell us "stories" – in our case stories about Israel, in the past and present, from the political, religious, cultural, and social standpoints. These maps are products not only of "the laws of alternative order" but also of "the norms and values of social tradition and order" (Harley, 1992, p. 232).

Wood and Fels (1986) asserted that "Every map is at once a synthesis of signs and a sign in itself" (p. 54) and that maps, as signs, are never free of their cultural context. The goal of this research was to check this assumption and to learn how it relates to the maps of the Holy Land. It is important to note that the research deals only with the analysis of the maps. It does not deal with the ideology of the map publishers and producers, but only with the way it is presented in the maps themselves. This is according to the maps' user who also deals with the final product itself.

Methods

This study examined 101 national maps of the area of the Holy Land that were on sale from 1994 to 2001. The total number of maps was found to be the total amount of maps available to the public during this time period. No selection process was made. The maps' publication dates were from 1975 to 2001 and they were published mainly in Israel (83%), but also elsewhere (18%): the Palestinian Authority, Austria, Germany, U.S.A., Australia, Switzerland, Hungary, Scotland, and England. The makers of the maps were private organizations (85 maps) or governmental organizations (16 maps) around the world. Forty-four mapmakers were found for all the maps, and each one of the leading six mapmakers published five or six maps. Among the companies were Carta, Mapa,

Atir, Corazin, and Landface. Most of the maps (79) were in English, 19 were in Hebrew, and only a few were in German, French, or Spanish.

They were “road maps” or “tourist maps” intended for tourists or visitors that were domestic or international travelling to the territory of the Holy Land. They were intended to be used for navigation, as souvenirs, for the promotion of sites or services, and for tourist information. Topographic, geological, or population maps were not the subject of study, so the maps investigated were those found at tourism points such as tourist information desks, offices of the Ministry of Tourism, hotels, inns, souvenir shops, bookshops, churches, and tourist sites. These were national maps with scales from 1:100,000 to 1:1,000,000. An attempt was made to include most of the maps available on the market, without any selection; still the list is not complete (see Table 1). Again, it is important to note that the motives of the mapmakers were not examined in this work which was confined to “map motives”. However, it may be interesting to assess the discrepancies or correlation between the mapmakers' motives on the one hand and the actual maps' representations on the other, in additional research.

Table 1
Characteristics of the maps

Number of maps	101
Name of maps	Varies: Israel -- touring map, Carta's map of Israel, holy land, map of Israel, Israel--within boundaries and cease fire lines, pilgrims map of the holy land, touring map of Israel, Israel, Israel with Jordan, the land of Israel that Jesus walked, Israel Sinai, Israel: ancient & modern, road map of Israel, modern Israel, pictorial map of Israel, map of Israel Jewish sites, Palestine.
Scale	>From 1:100,000 to 1:1,000,000.
Mapmakers	44 different mapmakers
Place of publication	83% in Israel, 18% outside Israel (Palestinian Authority, Austria, Germany, U.S.A., Australia, Switzerland, Hungary, Scotland, England.
Maps' publication dates	1975 to 2001
Makers of the maps	85% private organizations; 15% governmental organizations
Languages	79% English; 18% Hebrew; only a few in German, French, or Spanish.
Availability to the public	All are available to the public.
Use of the maps	Navigation, souvenirs, promotion of sites or services, and tourist information.
Selection process	None
Places where maps were found	Maps found at tourism points such as tourist information desks, offices of the Ministry of Tourism, hotels, inns, souvenir shops, book shops, churches, and tourist sites

The title Israel	marked on 80% of the maps
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The first stage of the research was to collect existing maps of the Holy Land published over 7 years. During this stage a process of identifying and "tagging" data for later retrieval and more intensive analysis took place, which is called "code mapping". The purpose of this analysis was to bring meaning, structure, and order to the data because interpretation requires acute awareness of the data, concentration, and openness (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002).

Reading maps could be compared to an incubation period during which a consistent follow-up is being made. After observing maps carefully for a few years a decision was made as to which themes would be chosen for analysis.

The second stage included labelling the findings in order to determine the main themes for analysis and in keeping with the research subject of the religious mapping of Israel. The themes decided on were consistent with the main research question: "Which religious elements appear" and their form of representation in the range of maps: the name of the map, including the naming of the State of Israel, the name "Palestine" and the name "Holy Land"; the map's colours; its frame, legend, topography, and modes of expressing information; the typeface; marking of political borders; symbolization - amount and type; pictures and paintings; main cities and sites; marking of routes and tourist trails; marking of historic eras and their meanings; the era in which site names were given; mapping of everyday life; the nature of the text; Jerusalem as the capital; names of sites; the semantics of names; internal subdivisions; and the proportion in size and symbolization of sites.

The third stage was to design a database to include all the information provided by the maps. In this stage the researcher translated what has been gleaned into a body of textual work that communicates these understandings to the reader. Also in this stage the researcher tried to table all the data. Microsoft Access software was used for entering, sorting, and analysing data. Each of the maps were analysed and all the information tabulated and classified, according to all the predetermined themes. Each map was analysed several times on its own and compared to the other maps. Repetitive map perusal and the opinion of five external reviewers were taken in consideration. Thirty students were also asked to participate in the research and to remark on the different themes of the maps in an open-ended collective interview.

The fourth stage involved data processing, conducted separately for each theme in order to summarize the findings. The fifth stage was a presentation of a "generalized Christian map" of the Holy Land.

All of these five stages were consistent with a hermeneutic approach that tries to bring meaning, structure, and order to the data by interpretation (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Quality was managed by the following verifications:

1. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation of the maps for a period of 7 years between 1994 and 2001.
2. Triangulation: The process of corroborating evidence from thirty students as well as five outside readers to ensure that the study will be accurate because the information is not drawn from a single source, individual, or process of data collection.

3. Peer review of the maps for years by the researcher and by five external reviewers from the field of Geography who were used as external audits.
4. Clarifying the researcher bias at the beginning of the research by adding that the research project elicited narratives about Israel and the Palestinian Authority, although it was generally centred on Israel as the focus of the Holy Land.
5. Extensive description of the different stages and the way that decisions were taken during the research.

As a whole quality was managed as was suggested by Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002), by ensuring a fit and application between the research questions, the data collection procedures and the analytic techniques. Quality was also managed by being alert and aware of prior knowledge of the researcher in the subject and by an ongoing assessment of the study's comprehensiveness.

Findings

The “holy-religious narrative” was found to substantiate the “Holy Land” image as a unity encompassing Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, with no internal borders; as a “whole” in God's eyes, as it were (Figure 1).

Figure 1: A map with a “holy-religious” narrative.



A.V. (unknown) Israel, The Holy Land, Touring map. Tel Aviv, Israel. 1:600,000

It seems as if the purpose of these messages was to create a “clean” image, which upholds the holy atmosphere expected from a “Holy Land” and also to reflect political and commercial interests. The holy narrative contrasted with the contemporary, sometimes controversial political conflicts; the political narratives presented by some of the maps were not “holy-religious” but “secular” (Figure 2).

Figure 2: A map with a “secular” narrative.



Survey of Israel (1997) Israel- Touring map, Israel 1:400,000

The holy narrative was usually accomplished by the omission of political content from the map, such as borders, frontiers, “problematic” names such as “Israel,” and areas such as “Judea and Samaria” or “the West Bank”. The “religious” maps were part of an attempt to present an image of peace; a region undergoing a peace process, hence safe for visitors.

Several different approaches in the religious maps seemed to be taken in order to blur the problematic political situation; in particular travel restrictions, the Israeli military presence (Gaza, the West Bank, Judea, and Samaria), and the question of ownership of the holy sites. Approaches to these matters can be classified as avoidance and omission of information, symbols, and elements from the map; partial mention of them; or the incorrect application of information and symbols. Most of the “religious” maps eschewed facts related to political dynamics in the area. The diversity of political representation in the maps fixed the relative place of each on an imaginary continuum between holy and secular. For example, a map that barely involved political issues and displayed more sacred elements would be located close to the “holy” extreme of the continuum.

A different aspect of the country appeared in maps intended for pilgrims to Israel (or the Holy Land). Political elements were hardly represented in these maps. For example, the present political borders were absent from most of them. The maps’ message is that their existence transcends time and space to attain a spiritual level divorced from Israel’s political reality. The message conveyed by the religious maps was uniform. It aimed to minimize everyday problems of security and to stress the sanctity of the Holy Land and its complete identification with the Kingdom of God rather than with the present-day secular entity.

The Narratives

Religious motifs were found to be emphasized in 28 of the 101 maps, as features appearing in the text, in the titles, in pictures, and particularly in the mapping of holy sites. Of all the religious narratives the Christian narrative was found to be the most salient: 25 maps contained predominantly Christian religious elements. Only three maps seemed to have been intended for Jewish visitors and contained Jewish elements. None of the maps appeared to have been intended for Muslims, Druze, Bahai, or members of other religions that revere the Holy Land as their holy place.

Three narratives were identified among the various Israeli maps: (1) The “holy Christian” narrative, (2) The Muslim narrative, and (3) The Jewish narrative (see Table 2). Most of the narratives were Christian oriented, reflecting the majority of the holy maps of current Israel. The Christian, Jewish, and Muslim maps of the Holy Land seemed to reveal only a partial and distorted historical aspect, contrived to reinforce the particular message of each religion at the price of a broader outline of the history of the Holy Land.

Table 2

The Three Identified Narratives in the Maps

	Christian narrative	Jewish narrative	Muslim narrative
Name of the map	The Holy Land	Jewish holy sites	“Palestine”
Colours of the map	White	White	Regular
Scale	Not given	Not given	Given
The north arrow	Not shown	Not shown	Shown
Map frame	Appears	Appears	Does not appear
Legend	Appears partially, usually unique	Appears partially	Appears (regular)
Topography	Usually not shown	Shown partially	Shown
Map’s typeface	Unique	Unique	Regular
Interior subdivisions	Shown usually. They are the subdivisions in Jesus’ times	Not shown	Not shown
Map symbols-existence and kind	Unique symbolization appears usually	Unique symbolization appears usually	Regular symbolization
Pictures and paintings	Appear	Appear	Do not appear
Map proportion of size	Does not appear	Does not appear	Appears
Routes and trails	Shown	Not shown	Not shown
Political borders	Not shown	Shown (Israel borders)	Shown (Palestine borders)
Continuity after borders	Appears	Does not appear	Appears
Neighbouring states	Not shown	Not shown	Shown partially

Sites other than the holy sites	Not shown	Not shown	Shown
Roads	Shown partially	Shown partially	Not shown
Text and its kind	Many religious texts given	Many religious texts given	None given

The “Holy Christian” narrative

As noted, 25 of the maps emphasized Christian religious motifs through the insertion of Christian features in the form of text, paintings, and pictures and through the map’s frame, symbols, and title (Figure 3).

Figure 3: A map with a “Christian” narrative.



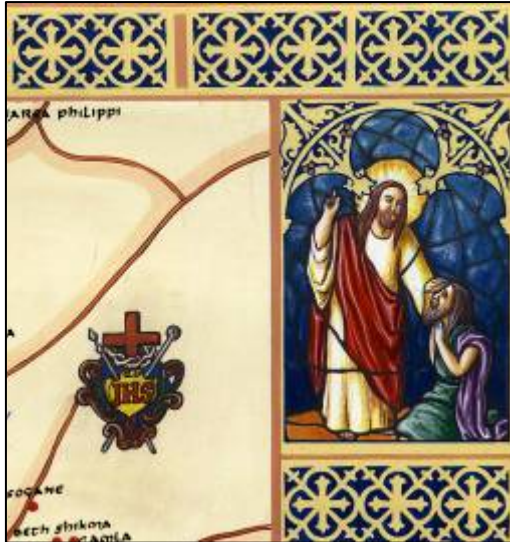
Amir publishing (1984) Pilgrims map of the Holy Land, Israel, 1: 666,000.

Map titles such as *The Holy Land* or *A Map for Christian Pilgrims* emphasized Christian holy elements that were not present in other maps. For example, the map entitled *Pilgrim's Map of the Holy Land for Biblical Research, the Journeys and Deeds of Jesus Christ* (The Carpenter's Workshops, 1978) depicted only holy elements as this title implies. The goal of these titles appeared to reinforce an image that builds up the holy atmosphere expected from a “Holy Land”. About one fifth of all the maps bore titles that did not mention the name “Israel” but usually contained the words “Holy Land”, “Pilgrim's”, and “Jesus”: These maps presented the land from the Christian point of view. Christian religious motifs were emphasized by the typography of the title, which lend the maps a sense of ancient religion and by the insertion of religious features such as pictures, paintings, and a Greek or Hellenistic frame (Figure 4). Characteristic of these maps are they reflected the present time while they continued in the tradition of the archaic maps of the Holy Land.

Most of the maps of this sort ignored the state of Israel, a surprising circumstance considering that most of the maps were produced in Israel. They disregarded various

political facts, such as cease-fire lines and border crossing points. They contained no political-textual or symbolic information, but they were replete with religious symbols and information (Figure 4).

Figure 4: A map with a Christian motif and frame.

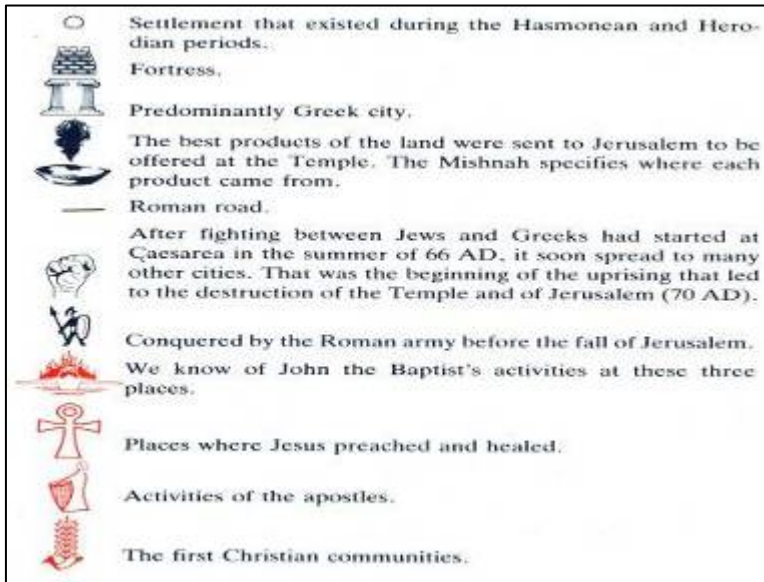


Kronenberg - Vilenski (unknown) The Land Where Jesus Walked. Israel. 1:400,000.

We can hypothetically synthesize all the maps that were examined and present a “generalized Christian map” of the Holy Land. Such a virtual map would exhibit the following features. The title would contain the words “Holy Land”, “Pilgrims”, “Galilee”, and “Jesus”. Scale and points of the compass would be absent. A direct consequence would be the difficulty of measuring distances between sites and showing their real and precise locations. The message transmitted would be that these data are irrelevant, while the sites’ religious meaning and importance are of the essence. Modern political borders would not exist in this map. Recall that access to Syria and Lebanon is non-existent in reality and that the sites in Jordan were only partially accessible to the pilgrim until the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994.

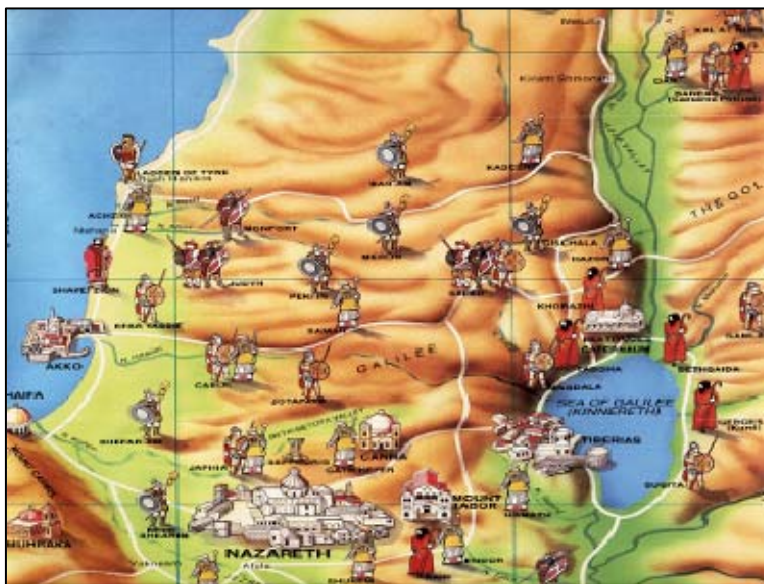
This hypothetical map would have a full legend displaying symbols, some unique and some standard (Figure 5). The standard, uniform, and recognized symbols would be of roads, historic sites, cities, national parks, and topographic features, but the unique symbols would be the mapmakers’ invention (Figure 6). Text would be presented both on the map itself near each given site and in the margins. It would contain religious information, Bible passages, and details of Jesus’ miracles and important journeys.

Figure 5: A “religious legend”.



Corazin (1989) The Land of Israel that Jesus Walked, Rosh Pina, Israel. 1:270,000.

Figure 6: A map with religious features.



PointOut (1988) Pilgrims map of the Holy Land, Israel. 1:500,000.

The generalized map would have a frame with the old-fashioned, traditional, and folklorist look like old paintings of scenes from the New Testament. The frame imparts a colourful and attractive appearance to the map, evocative of the historical-religious roots. Pictures and paintings would appear on this map and usually there would be a picture of each site. The paintings usually may have an “authentic” style and portray Bible stories or depict archaeological finds (for example, the amphitheatre at Beit-Shean). The pictures contribute to the pseudo-authentic image of the map and its attractive appearance. The size of each site’s symbol would not be proportional to the actual size. The different

places shown on the map would be in graded sizes, signifying their relative religious importance. The pilgrimage sites would be represented as the largest, though they may not be so in reality; some may consist of a single building. Places other than the holy sites would barely be marked. Topographic features would be indicated only in the most vague and basic way. They would appear not in the usual manner, but in a three-dimensional overview mode. In addition, the topography would be presented pictorially, as in old maps (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Old map topography.



A.V. (unknown) Israel, The Holy Land, Touring map, Tel Aviv, Israel. 1:600,000.

The “Jewish” narrative

As stated, relatively few maps presented the “Jewish narrative” (Figure 8). Only three maps were found to specialize in this presentation, although religious Jewish elements were found in a few others. Most maps emphasized all the elements through drawings or pictures of Jewish historic interest or religious sites on the map (for example, Jerusalem and Hebron). Another mode was the portrayal of “old paintings” of stories from the Bible. No Jewish symbols such as the Menorah or the Magen David (Shield of David) were found in any of the maps.

Figure 8: A map with a “holy Jewish” narrative.



Yesod Olam (1996) A map of the Holy Sites and the Holy Tombs, Jerusalem: Israel 1:500,000

The Jewish narrative may have been omitted for political and economic reasons because the publishers may have preferred not to emphasize Jewish existence and the Jewish nature of Israel. Instead they considered tourists of other religions, who comprise two thirds of all tourists. Or perhaps the publishers were concerned and did not print symbols that would testify to the maps' origin and nature. This may have also been part of an attempt to maintain neutrality: not to show preference of one religion over another or to portray national and political facts.

The “Jewish” and the “Christian” maps were found highly similar in sharing the emphasis on religious elements through drawings and pictures of religious sites on the map, and ignoring secular or political elements.

The “Muslim” narrative

No religious Muslim narrative was found, but a national “Palestinian” narrative was evident. This narrative was inseparable from the religious conflict in Israel. Maps with the name *Palestine* in the title emphasized the political existence of the Palestinian people. The best example is the official map of the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities published in 1998, with the title *Cities and Towns in Palestine*. The map's title and content made a statement about the ownership of the land (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Palestinian Geographic Centre, 1998). The map excluded “Israel” from its title and contents, just as the name *Israel* in the titles of many maps excluded “Palestinian” existence from them. Two main types of maps of Palestine were found: (1) “Greater Palestine”: maps that eliminated Israel altogether and presented the whole region as a Palestinian state and (2) “Smaller Palestine”: maps that presented the areas under the Palestine National Authority as a Palestinian state (Figure 9).

reader bring to the work. It seems as if the map takes on a life and a context of its own and is open to interpretation like any other text.

An effort is made in most of the maps to relate to ancient maps and not to modern maps of Israel. The maps deliberately chose to ignore the difference between these two kinds of maps, by presenting reality and imagination side by side. The pilgrimage maps are of a special type, showing present-day realities along with the traditions of the old Holy Land maps. The ancient cartographic method, which has been replaced by political, demographic, and realistic mapping in the last few decades apparently, has been reborn (Lewy, 1992)

An interesting point was the absence of any Muslim narrative, and the Jewish narrative in the maps was slight. The secular narrative of Israel and Palestine seemed to have taken over the religious conflicts, and these religious narratives are apparently always combined with the national and political entity of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Religious mapping of information was found to be uniform and typical in most of the maps. Its characteristics were these: mapping and marking exclusively of religious holy sites; investing the sites with a religious meaning disproportionate to their real importance in everyday life; and marking religious sites as places with general historical importance, while omitting to indicate that they are of importance to only one religion. Another characteristic was the presentation of details of a specific era (e.g., the time of Jesus) only, including the roads, settlements, and political units of those times and including mythological paintings on the map, from the New Testament or the Old Testament. This was aimed at stimulating a sense of sanctity and piety. Much religious information and many scriptural citations were given; holy people were named and events, religious journeys, and so on were denoted. All this contrasts with the absence of information of any other kind, and constitutes another symbol of religious mapping. It augments the mapping of symbols with a religious meaning, such as crosses and angels, and a typography that resembles Biblical script, imparting to the maps a sense of ancient religion.

One example was investing the map's title with religious aura (for example, "Dedicated to Bible Students"). Another characteristic was an enlarged and enhanced rendering of sites and areas that are most important to the same religion, to give the impression that they are the biggest and most important sites in Israel today. In reality, some of the sacred sites are small, located in remote and inaccessible places and sometimes even neglected. At times several eras were condensed on one map without note of the different historical times. All the names of a settlement dating to several periods may be marked on the map without any differentiation, or any indication that some of them no longer exist, such as the settlement "Beit-Tsida".

The limitations of the research were found to be equivalent to the limitations of the qualitative method. Harmonic is not one stated theory. It includes a family of attitudes, assumptions, and concepts and there is no established methodology capable of generalized application for interpretive analysis. One limitation was that the researcher was the main adjudicator of the maps and therefore, the research was affected by his/her culture, gender, status, nationality, and worldview. However, do not all researchers speak out of his or her personal interpretation?

Another limitation was the several interpretations that were available for each map and the fact that different readers offered different readings of the maps. One solution is to examine the likelihood; reasonableness of one interpretation compared to the other even though it is impossible to judge which is correct because there is not and cannot be certainty between “right” and “wrong” and between a “lie” and “truth” in the maps.

These limitations of subjectivity, lack of a strict methodology, existence of several interpretations by different readers of the maps or even by the same reader, and the inability to distinguish between right and wrong were found to be the main limitations of the research, but could also be described as its advantages, according to the qualitative researchers.

Summary

The goal of this study was to use the hermeneutic method as a tool for identifying messages and ideologies, while investigating current maps of the Holy Land. The purpose of all the maps reviewed was to impart a religious message, namely the sanctity and uniqueness of the Holy Land as representing spirituality; this overshadows any other geographic or cartographic information, which is usually absent from other maps. Israel's maps were found to serve as efficient tools for understanding conflicts, and through the maps' messages the map-user can draw conclusions about ideology and aspirations.

Little research exists on reading current maps by using qualitative methods. The map is used as a visiting card, so to speak, of the Holy Land and as an elementary tool for tourists. Religious maps play a large part in forming the mental map of the “Holy Land”. The messages of each map are meant to help understand the factors that influence the “readers” cognitive map and how their “world perception” is perceived according to these maps. Future research would do well to examine the “mental maps” of different visitors to the Holy Land as a result of using these maps. It is also possible to read maps from other parts of the world.

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