

GIDEON BIGER

## WHERE IS THE HOLY LAND?

## INTRODUCTION

Some of the reader of *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze* will open an eye seeing that a historical and political geographer present an article in this journal. But the aim of this study is to deal with a simple geographical-philosophical question: “Where is the Holy Land?” This much known area, both for Christians, Jews and Muslims, but the boundaries of that area, are more a philosophical idea than real lines.

The aim of this article is to deal with a rather “simple” historical geography philosophical question: “Where is the Holy Land?”

## WHERE IS THE HOLY LAND?

This much known area, “Holy” area for Christians, Jews and Moslems, brought about through history a struggle concerning which religious regime will rule the area. Any how, as will be presented here, the question regarding the boundaries of that area is more an abstract idea than real. Just to show this problematic notion—everybody knows that Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee are located in the Holy Land, but what about the modern Israeli cities of Beersheba and Eilat? Are these cities belongs to the Holy Land? What about the areas east of the Jordan River and the area east of the Sea of Galilee which have association with the stories of the

Bible and the New Testament? Those who will try to find a quick encyclopedia definition for “Holy Land” will encounter some unclear definitions such as “an Ancient country in southwestern Asia, on the east coast of the Mediterranean sea, a place of pilgrimage for Christians and Islam and Judaism” (in Princeton’s WordNet<sup>1</sup>) or, in Oxford Dictionary: “A region on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, reserved by Christians as the place in which Christ lived and taught”<sup>2</sup> or, in Free Base: “The area between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean Sea”<sup>3</sup> or even, in Macmillan Dictionary: “The countries in the Middle East where the stories of the Bible are based and where Christians believe that Jesus Christ lived.”<sup>4</sup> So where is the Holy Land?

#### THE HOLY LAND AS A MENTAL MAP

The map of the “holy Land” is a mental map. Mental or cognitive map is the space portrayed by individual consciousness or by social collective consciousness following the process of cognitive mapping.<sup>5</sup> Mental maps usually consist of two main layers. One is the initial interaction, namely the experience of visiting or viewing a place or space. This layer mainly reflects how the individual perceives the immediate environment.<sup>6</sup> The other is the secondary interaction, namely the experience generated from the introduction of maps as literature resources and this interaction depends on the values, beliefs and opinions of the social-cultural person.

Thus, mental map is not objective because it is based on the awareness and experience of an individual or of a society. As such, “the number of different boundaries for any region is equal to the square of the number of scholars consulted.” This “theory,” presented by Peter Haggett<sup>7</sup> back in 1975, seems to be even more valid when scholars are consulted about definitions of abstract areas, such as religious sacred areas. When Aristotle put

<sup>1</sup> *WordNet*. Princeton University, 2010. <http://wordnet.princeton.edu> (accessed 30.10.2014).

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford Dictionaries*. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Holy-Land?q=Holy+Land> (accessed 30.10.2014).

<sup>3</sup> *Freebase*. <http://www.freebase.com/m/0130zd> (accessed 30.10.2014).

<sup>4</sup> *Macmillan Dictionary*. <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/the-Holy-Land> (accessed 30.10.2014).

<sup>5</sup> Juval Portugali, *The Construction of Cognitive Maps* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 1996), 70.

<sup>6</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental-Perception Attitudes and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

<sup>7</sup> Peter Haggett, *Geography: A Modern Synthesis* (London: Heinemann, 1975).

the question “where,” within the ten properties needed for every entity, he set the status of the concept of “place” as a central component in human consciousness.<sup>8</sup> Two thousand years after Aristotle, Kant showed that the two ways by which a person sees the world are both space and time which are perceived through the experience. This analysis helps to distinguish between “Place” and “Space.” “Space” is a geographic dimension, while “Place” is the complex meaning provided by a person or a society to space at a time. Therefore “Place” depends on human consciousness. Consciousness provides meaning to space and creates it as a “Place.”

This notion, in which the “Place” is a product of the relationship between “Space,” “Time” and “Meaning,” leads to differences in the way mental maps, produced by unique consciousness, are viewed by different people or different groups. Human intervention could create a situation where two different persons or two groups see the same “Space” as two “Places” because their cognitive loads are different. Another conclusion emerging from this definition is that at different times the same space may not necessarily be the same “Place.”<sup>9</sup>

Collective consciousness of a group is created out of common view that is related to some cultural components: social reality, cultural traditions and history. Thus, cultural, traditional and education background combined with geographical knowledge, create the perception of sacred areas. At any period, beliefs about the geographical nature of the world may be more important to the public than the real facts that are only known to a small group of knowledgeable persons. Belief may have as much power as real fact, especially if this belief has strong traditional roots, as in the case of the Holy Land.

#### GEOGRAPHY AND RELIGION

The study of the relationship between geography and religion is a part of cultural geography research.<sup>10</sup> For some scholars it is seen as the theological explorations of the workings of Nature—a highly environmentally deterministic approach which identified the role of geographical environments in determining the nature and evolution of different religious traditions. Thus,

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<sup>8</sup> Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 12–21.

<sup>9</sup> Katherine Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 26–30.

<sup>10</sup> Lily Kong, “Geography and Religion: Trends and Prospects,” *Progress in Human Geography*, 14 (3) (1990): 355–371.

geographers are less concerned about religion per se, but are more sensitive to how religion as a cultural feature affects social, cultural, political and environmental systems. The point of focus of Geography of Religion is not the specifics of religious beliefs and practices, but how these religious beliefs and practices are internalized by adherents, and how these processes of internalization influence, and is influenced by, social systems.<sup>11</sup>

Traditional cultural geographical approaches to the study of religion mainly seek to determine religion's impact on the landscape. A more contemporary approach to the study of the intersections of geography and religion not only highlights the role of religion in effecting landscape changes and in assigning sacred meanings to specific places, but also acknowledges how in turn, religious ideology and practice at specific spaces are guided and transformed by their location.

Religion may be a starting point to examine issues of ethnic identity formation and the construction of ethnic identity. Geographers studying the negotiations of religious identity within various communities are often concerned with the overt articulation of religious identity, for example, how adherents in different locations establish their distinctive (religious and cultural) identities through their own understandings of the religion, and how they externally present their religious adherence (in terms of religious practice, ritual and behavior). As an overarching theme, the articulation of religious identity is concerned with material aspects of symbolizing religious identity (such as architecture and the establishment of a physical presence), with negotiations and struggles in asserting religious identity in the face of persecution and exclusion and with personal practices of religious ritual and behavior that re-establishes one's religious identity. Religious experiences and the belief in religious meanings transform physical spaces into sacred spaces. These perceptions and imaginings influence the way such spaces are used, and the personal, spiritual meanings developed in using such sacred spaces.

A key focus in the study of sacred places is the politics of identity, belonging and meaning that are ascribed to sacred sites, and the constant negotiations for power and legitimacy. Particularly in multicultural settings, the contestation for legitimacy, public approval, and negotiations for use of particular spaces are at the heart of determining how communities understand, internalize and struggle to compete for the right to practice their religious traditions in public spaces. Studies on sacred sites have focused on both material aspects of spaces (such as architectural distinctiveness) and socially con-

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<sup>11</sup> David E. Sopher, *Geography of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

structed spaces (such as rituals and demarcation of sacred spaces) to present religious meaning and significance.<sup>12</sup> Of all that was presented, this article is dealing with the demarcation of the sacred area called The Holy Land.

### THE LOCATION OF THE HOLY LAND

Many sites in the Holy Land have long been pilgrimage destinations for the Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Baha'is. Pilgrims visit the Holy Land in order to touch and see the physical manifestations of their faith, confirm their beliefs in the holy context with collective excitation, and connect personally to the Holy Land. Research concerning historical geography involved attempts to identify places and names mentioned in the Bible, and to determine their actual location.<sup>13</sup> Thus Biblical texts as well as geographic knowledge about the Holy Land were combined together in order to map the holy places in the Holy Land. Much literature dealing with the location and the role of those sacred places in the Holy Land and in other places was published. One of the most well-known historical geography research books is George Adam Smith's book *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, first published in 1894, had more than fifty editions, and is still being published today, even as an e-book, and his *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, first published in 1915, are also still published today.

The uniqueness of the Holy Land is that it is not a Place, neither a mountain nor a site, but rather a whole Land—a large piece of area, which all of it is considered to be a sacred area—the Terra Sancta. More over, usually sacred site belongs to one religion or even to one sect of that religion. There are Catholic sites, Orthodox sacred sites, Muslim sites, Jewish sites and sites that are sacred to other religions. Rarely is the case that two faiths are attached to one site. The uniqueness of the Holy Land is that many sites in the land belong to two or even three different religious groups. The Nativity Church in Bethlehem is held by the Catholic, Armenians and Greek Orthodox believers, the Holy Sepulture church in Jerusalem is held by the same three sects and also by the Egyptian Copts, the Syrian Church and the Ethiopian Church. The Temple Mount is claimed by Jews and Muslims; the An-

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<sup>12</sup> Kong, "Geography and religion," 355-371.

<sup>13</sup> See for example: *Biblical Geographic*, a journal which is an attempt to provide insights into place of the Bible, or *Biblical Research Bulletin*—containing geographical articles by Collins Steven, Fouts David, Graves David, Thomson William and others.

nunciation Church in Nazareth is contested by Christian and Moslems. Above all, the entire Holy Land is held a sacred area by Jews, Christians and Muslims. Any how, its dimension, location and boundaries are not accepted by all.

### THE BOUNDARIES OF THE HOLY LAND

The Holy Land, known for the non-religious world as Palestine, a name which was officially given to it in 134 A.D. by the Roman emperor Adrian, is an old historical-geographical concept. From Biblical times, when this part of the earth was first known as Canaan (*Genesis* 11:32), without any sacred character, different names have been given to it and its boundaries have been changed according to its political status. Since the era of the independent state of the Crusaders, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., when it was called “The Kingdom of Jerusalem,” Palestine has not been an independent state and every attempt at political definition has merely been an administrative convenience. The term *Palestine* has been associated variously and sometimes controversially with this small region, which some has asserted it as the State of Israel of today, the Palestinian Authority areas (including Gaza Strip and the West Bank) and sometimes also includes the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Both the geographic area designated by the name and the political status of it have changed over the course of time. As Palestine—the Holy Land is held sacred among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century it has been the object of conflicting claims of Jewish and Arab national movements, and the conflict has led to prolonged violence and, in several instances, to open warfare.

The word *Palestine* derives from *Philistia*, the name given by Herodotus, the Greek historian, to the land of the Philistines, who in the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. occupied a small pocket of land on the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, between modern Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Gaza. The name was revived by the Romans in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. in “Syria Palaestina,” designating the southern portion of the province of Syria, and made its way thence into Arabic, as *Filistin*, where it has been used to describe the region at least since the early Islamic era—the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Later on, the name had no official status until after World War One and the end of rule by the Ottoman Empire, when it was adopted for one of the regions mandated to Great Britain; in addition to an area roughly comprising the present-day Israel Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the mandate included the territory east

of the Jordan Valley now constituting the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which Britain placed under an administration separate from that of Palestine immediately after receiving the mandate for the territory.

The name *Palestine* has long been in popular use as a general term to denote a traditional region, but this usage does not imply precise boundaries. The perception of what constitutes Palestine's eastern boundary has been especially fluid, although the boundary frequently has been perceived as lying east of the Jordan River, extending at times to the edge of the Arabian Desert. In contemporary understanding, however, Palestine, but not the Holy Land, is generally defined as a region bounded on the east by the Jordan River, on the north by the border between modern Israel and Lebanon, on the west by the Mediterranean Sea (including the coast of Gaza), and on the south by the Negev, with its southernmost extension reaching the Gulf of Aqaba.

#### THE JEWISH HOLY LAND

For the Jews the Holy Land is known as The Land of Israel (אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, Erets Yisrael). It is explicitly referred as "Holy Land" in only one passage in the Old Testament (in Hebrew—אֶרֶץ קְדֹשָׁה, *Tanakh*) (*Zachariah* 2:16). The holiness of the land is generally implied in the Tanakh by the land being given to the Israelites by God, that is, it is the "Promised Land," an integral part of God's covenant with the Israeli nation. In the Torah (the first five books of the Bible, considered to be written by Moses from the mouth of God) it is stated that many Religious Rules commanded to the Israelites can only be performed in the Land of Israel which serves to differentiate it from other lands. For example, in the Land of Israel, "no land shall be sold permanently" (*Lev.* 25:23), and a rule prohibit agriculture work every seventh year, "letting the land to be resting" only applies to the Land of Israel. The observance of many holy days in the Land of Israel is confined to one day while in the Jewish Diaspora an extra day is observed. According one Israeli scholar: "The uniqueness of the Land of Israel is mainly 'geo-theological' and not merely climatic. This is the land which faces the entrance of the spiritual world, that sphere of existence that lies beyond the physical world known to us through our senses. This is the key to the land's unique status with regard to prophecy and prayer, and also with regard to the commandments."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Eliezer Shweid, *The Land of Israel. National Homeland of Land of Destiny* (London and Toronto: Farleigh Dickson University Press, 1985), 56.

The Jewish view of the boundaries of the Land of Israel has at least three traditional definitions, and even with those definitions there is much debate regarding the precise boundaries. The first definition is “THE PROMISED LAND”—the area which was promised to Abraham in *Genesis* (15:18): “From the River of Egypt to the Great River, the River Euphrates.” Scholars argue about the definition of the “River of Egypt” which could be the Nile River, the Al-Arish dry river in central Sinai Peninsula or even Beersheba Dry River in southern Israel of today. No eastern or western limits are portrayed in that definition. Nearly all scholars accept the notion that this definition is meant for the Messiah time and it is not an actual boundary for the definition of the essence of “The Holy Land.” The second definition is “THE AREA OF THOSE WHO CAME FROM EGYPT” which means the area settled by the twelve Israeli tribes in Biblical period. The Jewish view this definition as the “Land of Israel” mentioned in the books of Samuel and Kings (*Samuel I* 13:19 and *Kings II* 5:2). This definition excluded the Israeli city of Acre and the whole area north of it from its boundaries as that area was under the Phoenicians at that time. As Jews tried to be buried in the Holy Land, as this is a sacred area, Jews who lived in Acre, now part of modern Israel, for centuries were buried in an Arab village about 10 km east of Acre considered to be included in the Holy Land.

The third and most important Jewish definition which is used today by religious Jews is “THE AREA OF THOSE RETURNING FROM THE EXILE IN BABYLONIA.” Even though this event took place in 538 B.C. the declared boundaries were accepted only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. The Jewish Religious Rules for Eretz Yisrael are applied to this definition apply to the Galilee, Samaria, Judea, northern Negev Desert and some areas east of the Jordan River but excluded the area along the shore south of the modern Israeli city of Ashkelon and all the southern Negev and the Arava Valley which today are part of the state of Israel, as well as all of Gaza Strip. All the political changes that took place after this definition was established never changed this religious boundary and they are valid today for all the religious “Rules” that are related to the Land of Israel. By this, for example, the Jewish villages located out of those lines even though they are located in the State of Israel are allowed to cultivate their land in the seventh year and orthodox Jews can eat their agriculture yield. Thus religious lines which were drowned about 1800 years ago still play some role in modern Israel and the Jewish world.

All these definitions have nothing to do with any actual political definition. Thus the Israeli city of Eilat, known for its holiday resort facilities, is not considered to be in “the Land of Israel” or in the Jewish Holy Land.



Even though, some Jews still claim their attachment to the old notion of the “Promised Land” and claim that the whole area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean should be included in the Jewish State.

#### THE HOLY LAND OR *TERRA SANCTA* OF THE CHRISTIANS

For Christians, Palestine, the Holy Land, *Terra Sancta*, is considered holy because of its association with the birth, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ of the city of Nazareth. As the holy Land was promised to the Jews, and as the Jews did not welcome Jesus Christ, the Christian doctrine accepted that the Holy Land that was promised to the Jews was transformed to the New People of God, the Christians. The term *Terra Sancta*, in Greek Ἅγιοι Τόποι, is not mentioned in the New Testament or in the Gospels, neither in the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles or The Book of Revelation. Only later on, in later Christian writing from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. that term *Terra Sancta* is used<sup>15</sup> and Christian were advised to visit the area in order to feel the spirit of Jesus Christ in the places where He was.<sup>16</sup> From the early days of Christendom, Christian books and editions of the Bible often had maps of the Holy Land (considered to be the areas of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea). Some scholars<sup>17</sup> claimed that the structuring of the notion of the “Holy Land” is intoxication collective Christian views formed during the Middle Ages. This attitude is based on the descriptions of travelers and visitors to the country at that time who visited the same places reached by their predecessors. Their imaginary map varied from period to period and from group to group.

As a distinct geographic area, some scholar claim that the description “Holy Land” encompasses modern-day Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan and sometimes Syria. Thus, some Christian scholars tried to map the boundaries of the political entity of Judea under the Romans in the first half of the first century A.D. in order to present it as the Holy Land. Others tried to follow the place were the activities of Christ and his twelve Apostles lived

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<sup>15</sup> Peter I. Walker, *Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Places in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> William D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1974).

<sup>17</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. from the French by Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

and taught. This view brings about some confusion as to the area included in the Holy Land since the activities of the Apostles went far away from the area of the activities of Christ himself. This means that the Holy Land includes part of today's Jordan, Syria, Turkey and even Malta. Thus the religious Christian world cannot give a precise definition of the Holy Land.

#### THE HOLY LAND IN THE ISLAMIC VIEW

Although Palestine holds a position of high importance in Islam as can be seen from the amount of writing about its history and geography during the years,<sup>18</sup> Islamic scholar seldom dealt with a definition of the boundaries of their Holy Land (الأرض المقدسة, *Al-Ard Al-Muqaddasah*), as they mainly dealt with Holy Cities—Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem or even only with Holy sites, like mosques in those cities. It is reported (but not written in the *Qur'an*) that their Prophet Muhammad said “There are only three mosques to which you should embark on a journey: the sacred mosque [Mecca, today in Saudi Arabia], this mosque of mine [Madinah, Saudi Arabia], and the mosque of Al-Aqsa [Jerusalem, Palestine/Israel].” The Islamic tradition concerning the holiness of Palestine mainly refers to the holiness of the city of Jerusalem which was the first *Qiblah* (قبلة)—the place toward which Muslims turn in prayer. Later Muhammad changed the *Qiblah* from Jerusalem to Mecca (*Qur'an* 2:142–144).

According to Muslim tradition it is Jerusalem that Muhammad visited journey and ascension. It is said that one evening the angel Gabriel miraculously took the Prophet from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to the Furthest Mosque (Al-Aqsa). He was then taken up to the heavens to be shown the signs of God. The Prophet met with previous prophets and led them in prayer. He was then taken back to Mecca. The whole experience (which Muslim commentators take literally and Muslims believe as a miracle) lasted a few hours of a night. The event of a journey is mentioned in the *Qur'an*, (The Muslim Holy Book) in the first verse of Chapter 17 entitled ‘The Children of Israel:’ “Glory to Allah, Who did take His servant for a journey by night, from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts we did bless—in order that we might show him some of our signs. For He is the One who hears and knows all things.” (*Qur'an* 17:1)

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<sup>18</sup> Guy Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and Holy Land from 650 A.D. to 1500 A.D.* (New York, NY: Cosimo Classics, 2010). First published in 1890.

Later Muslim scholars said that the Farthest Mosque in on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and that made it a sacred place for Muslim believers. The night journey further reinforced the link between Mecca and Jerusalem as Holy Cities, and serves as an example of every Muslim's deep devotion and spiritual connection with Jerusalem. during his night

In the *Qur'an* the term *Al-Arḍ Al-Muqaddasah*—"The Holy Land" is mentioned at least seven times, once when Moses proclaims to the Children of Israel: "O my people! Enter the holy land which Allah hath assigned unto you, and turn not back ignominiously, for then will ye be overthrown, to your own ruin" (*Qur'an* 5:21). The exact region referred to as "Blessed Land" in the *Qur'an* (21:17) is described by scholars as including Damascus, Palestine and a bit of Jordan, or the area between al-Arish and the Euphrates River. Even though, some referred it only to "the land of Jericho" or only to the area between Beersheba and the Plain of Esdraelon between Haifa and Beit She'an in northern modern Israel. Recently, Arab and Islamic scholars, clergies and political leaders, use the designation *Palestine* to imply a Palestinian religious claim to sovereignty over the whole former territory west of the Jordan River, including all of Israel. As a political act the Muslims declare the whole area of British Palestine, established in the 1920's "a Holy Land" placed it under the authority of the Wakf (وقف, Muslim charity trust institute) belongs to the whole Muslim world, not only to its inhabitants. A land under this status could not be sold to anyone, especially non-Muslim. As such it cannot be used by other than Muslims.

Thus a political entity became a sacred area—defined by known boundaries. The *Hamas Charter*<sup>19</sup> declare that "Palestine is an Islamic Wakf; the liberation of Palestine is an individual duty binding on all Muslims everywhere." Not every Muslim adopted this view and the area and boundaries of the Muslim Holy Land is still under debate.

#### THE POLITICAL DEFINITION OF MODERN PALESTINE —ISRAEL AND THE HOLY LAND

For more than 600 years, since the fall of the second Crusader's Kingdom of Jerusalem, Palestine, the Holy Land, was not an independent country. The Ottoman Empire ruled this area from 1517 till 1917 but without even called it

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<sup>19</sup> August 18, 1988.

by the Arabic name Filistin. Palestine was merely an abstract name without and precise definition. Only the occupation of Palestine by the British Empire during World War One brought change in its status. The League of Nation gave, in April 1920, the Mandate to rule Palestine to Britain, for bring it to independence while helping to establish there a Jewish National homeland. The British, partly on their own, partly vis-à-vis with France, established the boundaries of Modern Palestine<sup>20</sup> placing it between the Jordan River and the Arava Valley in the east and the Mediterranean Sea in the west and from the source of the Jordan River in the north to the Gulf of Aqaba in the south. This definition brought about a new definition for the Holy Land, which, for some, seems to be parallel to the definition of the old notion of the Holy Land. In some today publication, one can find that the Holy Land is the area which is now modern Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

#### CONCLUSIONS: WHERE IS THE HOLY LAND?

The more descriptions that are studied, the more confused a reader become. But even though the descriptions differ, the area of agreement is still considerable. The “core area” of the Holy Land which is accepted by all lies between the Jordan River included the Sea of Galilee in the east and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. The southern limit is the pre-modern inhabitant area which runs along a line between the Dead Sea and the city of Gaza, while the northern line runs somewhere in the Galilee area between Acre and the Jordan River. This definition can be accepted by the religions that used the term Holy Land for that piece of the world. Others, mainly motivated by modern political aspirations, place the lines on the boundaries of British Palestine. Others even include areas located east of the Jordan River as it appears in the Jewish description of “The boundaries of those returned from Babylonia” and the Christian cities of Pella and Madaba.

Thus it seems that even a world known area—the Holy Land, can raise problem of definition for scholars and for the general public. When dealing with an abstract area, as the Holy Land, it is necessary to be aware of both problems of definition and of the personal perception of the writer who prepared the source material being studied. Note should also be taken of the British historical geographer Alan Baker’s stricture that “in order to under-

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<sup>20</sup> Gideon Biger, *The Boundaries of Modern Palestine, 1840-1947* (London: Routledge, 2004).

stand fully the limitations imposed by a particular source material, it is imperative that the scholar is aware of the manner in which, and the purpose for which, his material was originally committed.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, although millions of pilgrims came each year to visit the Holy Land and many people live in it and perform rituals devoted to the Holy Land, no valid clear areal definition of it exists.

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<sup>21</sup> Alan R.H. Baker, John D. Hamshere, and John Langton (eds), *Geographical Interpretation of Historical Sources* (London: Barnes and Noble, 1975), 15–17.

## GDZIE JEST ZIEMIA ŚWIĘTA?

## Streszczenie

Ziemia Święta, czyli obszar uważany za *Terra Sancta* przez żydów, chrześcijan i muzułmanów, jest bardzo dobrze znany, ale jej granice nie są dokładnie ustalone, ponieważ każdy we właściwy dla siebie sposób definiuje ten szczególny obszar. Mapa Ziemi Świętej jest mentalnym tworem istniejącym w wyobraźni, utworzonym w zależności od przekonań osób zajmujących się tym zagadnieniem. Szczególną cechą Ziemi Świętej jest, z jednej strony, uznanie jej za świętą przez trzy religie, z drugiej zaś fakt, że mamy do czynienia nie tylko z listą świętych miejsc, co jest czymś powszechnym na całym świecie, ale ze świętym obszarem, w którym te święte miejsca się znajdują. Tradycja żydowska wskazuje trzy różne granice, chrześcijańska granica natomiast nie jest dokładnie określona, muzułmańska zaś opinia jest prawie nieznaną. Aktualne granice Izraela i Palestyny nie są granicami Ziemi Świętej, jakkolwiek pielgrzymi udający się na ten święty teren odwiedzają te współczesne państwa z przekonaniem, że jest to Ziemia Święta.

*Przełożył Krzysztof Modras OP*

**Słowa kluczowe:** Ziemia Święta, Palestyna, Izrael, granice, mapy mentalne, miejsce święte, pielgrzymi.

## WHERE IS THE HOLY LAND?

## Summary

The Holy Land, the area considered to be *Terra Sancta* for Jews, Christians and Muslims, is very well known, but its exact limits are not fixed as everybody has his or her definition of that special area. The Holy Land is an imagined area and its map are mental map, established according the beliefs of those who deals with it. The Uniqueness of the Holy Land is one hand—its holiness for three religions, and, on the other hand, we deals not only with a list of holy places, which is common everywhere, but with the whole area in which those holy places are located. Even though, The Jewish tradition can present three different limits, the Christian one is not precise and the Muslim's view is nearly not known. As such, the modern boundaries of Israel and Palestine are not the boundaries of the Holy Land, although those, which made a pilgrimage to this holy area, visit these modern countries, with the view that they visit the Holy Land.

*Summarised by Gideon Biger*

**Key words:** Holy Land, Palestine, Israel, Boundaries, mental maps, holy place, pilgrims.