Israel's Place-Names as Reflection of Continuity and Change in Nation-Building

SAUL B. COHEN AND NURIT KLIOT

The study of place-names, including their association with certain sites, situations and locations is a traditional focus for cultural geography. A name distinguishes one place from another, thereby initiating the process of geographical uniqueness. Place-names reflect not only the uniqueness and the natural characteristics of particular locations, but also provide insight into the political, cultural and religious ways in which a people experience particular environments, historically and contemporaneously.[1]

Categories of names have marked similarity across the globe. Thus, we find a large group of names which are "naturally-derived," e.g., water bodies, (Ocean City, Riveredge), physiographic characteristics (White Plains, Mountainview), flora (Appleton, Oakley) and fauna (Oxford, Deerhurst). In combination with another group of names that are "agricultural-rural" (Greenfield, Farmington), such place-naming reflects powerful emotional feelings towards the natural-rural amongst societies in varying stages of their development. In part, the explanation is that many places started their existence as villages, hamlets and small town, and that their names described a real-world situation. However, such names also reflect an abstract and a symbolic world. People have a predilection for a nomenclature that conjures up the beauty of nature, the lushness of vegetation, the grandeur of mountains and rivers, and the harmony of song in the bird and animal world.

In addition to the natural-rural category, there is the large culturally-derived category which is even richer in descriptive and associative names. The culturally-derived names are divided into such diverse sub-groups as occupations (Bakersville, Tannersville), ancient tribes and ancestors (Kazakhstan, Essex), rulers and conquerors (Leningrad, Napoleonville), explorers (Columbus, Darwin), and farming life (Hayfield, Wheaton). They also

---

[1]Stewart suggests that place-names have two properties: 1) they create an entity, and 2) they have a utilitarian function for those who develop the nomenclature. See Stewart, George R., *Names on the Land* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1958).

include artifacts (Monument Lake, New Castle, Hammersmith).[2] Culturally-derived names are transferred from one language or culture to another, either in accurate or distorted form, an example being such American Indian-derived place-names as Chicago, Detroit and Missouri. Finally, an important sub-group consists of abstract names whose symbolic meaning promotes positive impressions (Unity, Harmony, Freedomville, Independence). Stewart and Zelinsky respectively use the terms "commendatory" and "perfectionist" to describe this sub-group.[3]

THE ISRAELI CONTEXT FOR NAMING PLACES

The Israeli experience of place-naming is unique in that it expresses the feeling of a particular people with a particular history towards a particular territory. However, because the context is that of a relatively short nation-building and state-formation era, lessons learned would seem to have general relevance to a world, two-thirds of whose national states have emerged since the end of World War Two. This study addresses four general sets of questions that relate to the occurrence of Hebrew place-names in Israel: the major themes of categorization; the impact of nationhood on continuity and change in nomenclature; regional patterns; and settlement-type preferences. The questions are:

1) What are the major themes that characterize place-naming in Israel? Are place-names mainly natural-rural or mostly culturally-derived, is there a balance between the two categories? Which are the most salient sub-groups within each major category? What has been the particular role of Zionist ideology in generating names de novo or adapting them from the past in shaping these themes?

2) Has the emphasis on place-names categories of the Israeli statehood era been the same as that of the Zionist nation-building era (1878-1948)? Which forces contribute to continuity of nomenclature, and which effect changes?

3) What is the geographical distribution and pattern of the major and sub-categories? Do some place-name sub-groups appear more frequently in certain regions than in others, and if it is so, why? Are there substantial differences in those regions that lie outside the 1967 borders?

4) Do particular settlement-types display preferences for one place-name

[2]Field, John, *?Rediscovering Place-Names* (Tring, Herts: Shire Publications, 1971), pp. 3–5.

[3]Stewart, George R., *Names on the Globe* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), and Zelinsky, Wilbur, *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp. 62–63.

category rather than another? The major settlement-types in Israel are *Kibbutzim* – collective (communal) villages, *Moshavim* – cooperative villages, *Moshavot* – private landholders' villages, and towns and cities. Israel does not have hamlets but some places are specialized functional communities, e.g., youth institutions for orphans or handicapped children, agricultural schools, mixed agricultural and military settlements organized by Nahal (Noar Halutzi Lohem), the Israel Army's pioneer settlement corps, and health institutions.

These general questions are asked in the context of a formal nomenclature-decision process that has existed for half a century, and adheres to certain general guidelines. While in the first half century of Zionist settlement, responsibility for naming places was assumed by the separate pioneering village groups, after 1924 the task was assumed by the Place-Names Committee of the Keren Kayemeth Le'Israel (Jewish National Fund), – the major land settlement organization of the Zionist movement. The committee continued its activities until statehood, setting the basic principles for naming places: revival of ancient names from the Biblical and Mishnaic-Talmudic periods, use of Hebrew and not foreign names in general, and commemoration of Zionist leaders. Members could suggest their settlement's name, and were usually consulted before the committee's final decision. During this period, places were often named after living persons. In particular, the Jewish National Fund often pressured settlers to accept place-names which commemorated philanthropists who gave large sums of money to the Zionist movement and expected name recogonition in return for these contributions.

The policy of naming places after living perons was abandoned upon achievement of statehood, when responsibility for naming places in Israel was assigned to the Israel Place-Names Committee, an arm of the Prime Minister's office.[4] Members are nominated by different public organizations including academia. In making their decisions the committee consults with scholars and "lovers of Erez Israel," people who are known for their broad knowledge of the history and geography of Palestine/Israel.[5] In its overall policy, the committee has accepted the basic principles of the pre-State committee, i.e., revival of Hebrew names from the Biblical and Talmudic periods, and use of Hebrew names in general. But, as noted above, the committee has decided to commemorate national leaders, political figures and military heroes only after their death. The committee also gives priority

---

[4]Personal communication from Professor David Amiran, veteran member of the Israel Place-Names Committee (March, 1980).

[5]Personal communication from Dr. Ze'ev Vilnay, veteran member of the Israel Place-Names Committee and of its predecessor, the Jewish National Fund's Place-Name Committee (March, 1980).

to the right of settlers to propose the name of their place, and, unlike the pre-State committee, rarely imposes its opinions on a settlement.

Some of the continuity and change that one can anticipate concerning naming places in Israel can be related to the different approaches adopted by the pre-State committees. In particular, the increasingly strong role of the settlements themselves in the nomenclature process should not be underestimated. This role reflects the pervasive ideological convictions and the historical-political events of specific time-periods, as will be demonstrated in the ensuing discussion.

Based upon Vilnay's work[6] and on varius geographical lexicons, one can offer six thematic categories for place-names in Israel. These categories follow general nomenclature principles, but also reflect the uniqueness of the "Land of the Bible" and the "Land of Modern Zionist Redemption."

1. Israel is an ancient land, the "Land of the Bible." As expected, therefore, many places are from the Old Testament, or from the later Mishnaic-Talmudic periods (from the latter half of second century A.D. to C. 500 A.D.). In addition, all the other conquerors and rulers of Palestine — Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, Turks and British left their impact on the landscape through place-names.

2. Modern Israel was established as the National Home for Jews from the Diaspora. Because Zionist leaders played an important role in forging the settlement map of Israel, many places in Israel bear the names of Zionist leaders, especially the ideological standard-bearers.

3. The "natural-rural" bias that is common to Israel and to other societies accounts for many of the land's place-names, both before and subsequent to Zionist settlement. The Zionist myth idealized farming as the road into "normalization" of the Jewish people, and the pioneering agricultural communities have produced a very high proportion of the national élite who were in a position to articulate national values. It follows, then, that an important group of place-names has natural-rural connotations.

4. Conflict between Jew and Arab has characterized both the pre-and post-statehood periods. Therefore, a sizeable place-name category commemorates the different campaigns and wars, and also individuals killed in the conflict.

5. Even before the Arab conquest of Palestine in A.D. 634–38, Arabs had a presence in the Holy Land, as reflected in the appearance of Arabic words in the various books of the Bible. Arabic names in their original,

---

[6]Vilnay, Ze'ev, *Names of our Settlements* (Tel Aviv: Massada, 1958), pp. 11–36.

modified or distorted meanings reappear in Hebrew place-names, where there were no prior Hebrew names. Some of these Arabic names reflect, in turn, the transliteration of more ancient names, expecially Greek and Roman, e.g., 'Imwas from Emmaus, Baniass from Paneas, Sabastiya from Sebaste, Nablus from Neapolis, Julis from Julias.

6. As in other parts of the world, symbolic and abstract names appear in Israel. Many of these are commendatory or perfectionist in nature.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

In order to define and classify the above categories, the following measures were taken. First, a place was defined as "any area which has a personality either natural, cultural or both," with the limitation that only places in which people now live are included. Accordingly, there are 889 Hebrew places (which have names) in Israel.[7] Of these, 345 were founded before statehood and 544 after statehood. Most of the 889 places are villages, towns and cities. A small number of places are the sites of educational and health institutions, and of Nahal settlements. Second, the source of the place-names was determined by using two different place-name lexicons in which the reasons for name selection are specified. Whenever there was ambiguity or contradiction between the two lexicons or a name was cited as having a dual origin, a third lexicon was used and its information for the name source became decisive.[8] Survey of Israel maps at a scale of 1:250,000 were used to cross-validate the recording of all places.

Settlements were then classified according to organizational types (i.e., Kibbutz, Moshav, Moshava, Towns and Cities, and Institutions). The results are presented in Table 1. This table relates all categories of place-names origins in Israel to type of settlement. The largest group is the ancient Biblical and Mishnaic-Talmudic, comprising about 40 percent of all place-names origins in Israel. The second two largest groups are the natural-rural and the national-Zionist, each with somewhat less than 20 percent. Thus, approximately 75 percent of all the Hebrew place-names in Israel is explained by these three themes. The other groups of place-names are the abstract-symbolic, Arabic language-origin, military-heroism, and a very small group of

---

[7]This number applies to Israeli places up to 1978. The original analysis presented in Tables 3 and 4 distinguish between those places within Israel's pre-1967 borders and those of today.

[8]The first two lexicons are Hareouveni, Emanuel, *The Settlements of Israel and their Archaeological Sites* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1974), and Israel Ministry of Defense, *Israel Geographical Sites and Places* (6th ed.; Jerusalem: Karta, 1978). The third lexicon is Vilnay, Ze'ev, *Ariel Encyclopedia for the Study of the Land of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1978).

names derived from international sources. Each of the above groups will be discussed separately.[9]

ANCIENT PLACE-NAMES: BIBLICAL, MISHNAIC-TALMUDIC AND OTHERS

Among the ancient names, the Biblical (i.e., Old Testament) and Mishnaic-Talmudic names are especially common in all the geographical regions of Israel and in all types of settlements. This category is the largest with 350 settlements and is divided into sub-groups. First, there are place-names which were taken from one of the books of the Old Testament in specific application of a verse. Peta*h* Tiqwa (the Gate of Hope) – the name of a moshava, is taken from Hosea 2:17., and Zeru'a (Sown Land) is the name of moshav taken from Jeremiah, 2:2. ("When you followed me in the wilderness, through a land unsown").

A second sub-group of Biblical names consists of persons who appear in the Old Testament. The moshavim Devorah and Barak are named, respectively, after the Biblical prophetess and the military leader (Judges, 3:4–10). Other examples are Sedé 'Uziyyahu the field of 'Uziyyahu), a moshav named after 'Uziyyahu, King of Judah, (II Kings, 14:21–22) and Bét Ne*h*emya a moshav named after the author of the later Old Testament book who, together with Ezra, codified the Law and fortified Jerusalem in the Return from the Babylonian Exile.

A third sub-group is Mishnaic-Talmudic in origin, e.g., Haifa, Tiberias, Zefat and *G*innosar.

A fourth sub-group of this category are Biblical and Talmudic names that have been applied to the Israeli landscape through Arab mediation and distortion. Thus the Arabic name Isdud is the Biblical town of Ashod, and the Arabic name Yibne is the ancient town of Yavne. (Both places, today, have regained their Hebrew names and are prosperous development towns.) It is important to note that many of the ancient names are assigned to places which are now located on or near the Biblical site. However, some places bear Old Testament names although they are located far from the ancient site, or when the accurate location is unknown. An example of a place far removed from its original site is Re*h*ovot, which was located originally in the Israeli Negev, while today it is 20 kilometers south of Tel Aviv, in the center of Israel.

The last sub-group among the ancient names has roots in the Egyptian, Canaanite, Assyrian, Crusaders and Turkish periods of influence on Pales-

---

[9]Transcription of Hebrew Place-Names into English follows the official system adopted by the Survey of Israel.

tine-Israel. This group includes Greek and Roman names that were co-terminus with the Mishnaic-Talmudic periods. Examples are: 'En 'Iron (Egyptian-the Spring of Iron), Rishpon (Canaanite — Reshef — the Diety of Fire and Thunder), Magdi' él (Canaanite — Fertility from God), Gat (Philistine — Winepress), Sarona (Crusader, Arabic), and Caesaria (Roman-Emperor).

As with the ancient names noted above, many of the other Ancient-Biblical names have meanings that allow them to be placed in another nomenclature category as well. Some of them have a natural-rural, and others have an abstract-symbolic connotation. Thus, approximately 29 percent of all ancient names have a symbolic meaning; examples are Bit*h*a (Safety – Come back, keep peace and you will be safe, Isaiah – 30:15), and *H*erev-Le' et (Sword into Mattock, Isaiah, 2:4). Approximately 22 percent of the Ancient-Biblical place-names are natural-rural. Examples are Shedema (Fields, Isaiah, 37:27), Shetula (Planted, Psalms, 1:2), Telamim (Furrows – "For this is thy provision for it, watering its furrows, leveling its ridges", Psalms, 65:10), and Te'ashur (Box, Isaiah, 41:19).

Many of the twelve tribes – the sons of Jacob are commemorated in the names of Regional Councils, i.e., administrative authorities which integrate rural communities such as kibbutzim and moshavim. Examples are: Zevulun, B'nai Shimon, Menashe. Place-names of schools and hospitals also often bear names of the twelve tribes.

One may inquire why such a large number of place-names in Israel have ancient names. First, many of the place-names were transmitted from ancient times, from one generation to another. This is true for Yerushalayim-Jerusalem or Akko-Acre. These names became sacred and even foreign rulers were not able to erase them from the map of Jewish memory and history. (The Byzantine name for Yerushalayim was Capitolina; and the Arabic was Al-Kuds.) Second, Jewish communities in Palestine in medieval times, revived Talmudic names such as Tiberias and Zefat. The direct connection between Judaism and naming of places is salient in those towns and in settlements, mostly moshavot, which were founded by the first wave of immigration to Palestine in the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century. Many of these immigrants were religious or traditional, and adopted Biblical names for their moshavot.

The Zionist Movement which developed in the second half of the 19th century was responsible for the subsequent waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, and for the establishment of hundreds of settlements. This movement stressed the revival of the Jewish people in its ancient motherland – the Land of Israel. The waves of immigration which followed the First Aliya (the first wave of immigration) were socialist and anti-clerical in their political

orientation, but they also sought continuity with their ancestors, and naming places with ancient Biblical and Mishnaic-Talmudic names became a necessary step in the process of rooting the Jewish people to its ancient territory. Thus the former trend of traditionalists in giving Old Testament names to places was strengthened by the Socialist-Zionist movements[10]

Another element which reinforced the usage of Biblical names was the revival of the Hebrew language and the Hebrew culture. The Bible was an important source for the revived language and an important source for Hebrew names. When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, the tradition of naming places to reinforce the continuity with the Ancient Kindom of Israel, was well established.

NATURAL-RURAL PLACE-NAMES

Natural-rural names, the second largest category with 167 places, is also divided by sub-groups. Here there is considerable similarity between Israel and other societies. The first sub-group is physical-geographical, and is divided into various themes such as physiographic formations, topography, soils, minerals and water bodies. Mountains, hills, ridges, valleys and plains are very popular prefixes to place-names. In Israel, many names have the prefix Giv'a which means hill. Examples are Giv'at *H*en (the Hill of Charm) and Giv'at *H*ayyim (Hayim's Hill). Ramim means High Places, and the word Ma'alé means a steep road climbing up a mountain. Ma'alé Gilboa' means the road up to the Gilboa' mountains. Another word which suggests topographical height is the word Tel which refers to an artificial hill or mound. Tel Aviv (the Hill of the Spring) and Tel Yosef (Joseph's Hill) are examples. Valleys appear in names such as ''Mishmar Ha'Émeq (the Guardian of the Valley), and Migdal Ha'Émeq (the Tower of the Valley).

Many Arabic place-names in Israel reflect the same degree of topographical variety. The Arabic Rama refers to high places: Geba means hill; and Jebel means mountain. Arabic names which belong to this group are the commonest names among the naturally-derived Arabic place-names in Israel.[11] Other Arabic place-names include physical features such as valleys, rivers, caves, springs and other water bodies.

Other major themes within the physical-geographical sub-group include minerals, soils and types of stones. Examples are Even Yehuda (Yehuda's

[10]Bein, Alex, *History of the Jewish Settlement in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Massada, 1976), and Eisenstadt, S. N., *Israeli Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1967).

[11]Soffer, Arnon, ''Geographical Terms in Names of Arabic Villages in Israel,'' *Teva Va'Aretz* (1978), 21, 1, pp. 4–9.

Stone), Zur Moshe (the Flint of Moses), *H*olon (the City of Dunes), and Hamra (Red Soil). Water bodies are also very common among place-names in this general sub-category. Examples are the usage of Ein (Spring) as a prefix — Ein Vered (the Spring of Rose Flower), and Ein Ganim (the Spring of Gardens). Ma'yan Zevi (Many Rivers), Ashdot Ya'aqov (the Falls of Jacob), and Gadot (River's Banks — the Jordan in this case) are further examples. The sea and the coast are mentioned in names such as Bat Galim (the Daughter of the Waves), and Nof Yam (the View of the Sea).

Fauna and flora mostly appear as place-names of rural communities. The meanings of Beit Oren (House of Pine), Álonim (Oaks), Nesher (Eagle), and Lavi (Lion) are illustrative.

The last sub-group is the rural-farming category. Re-establishment of Jewish settlement in modern Israel was mainly carried out by farming communities which tended to choose names that reflected their everyday existence and their aspirations. Examples are Ha Yogev (the Farmer), Ha Zore'a (the Sower), Nitzanim (Buds), Regavim (Clods), and Luzit (Almond). It is also important to note that many places have the prefix Sedé (Field), Kfar or Kefar (Village), or Gan (Garden) which connote farming and rural symbolism. As with the ancient category, the natural-rural may convey a dual meaning in tieing the names of physical features to that of an individual.

There is little doubt that the choice of Biblical and Mishnaic-Talmudic place-names symbolizes *continuity* between past and present in the history of the Jewish people, while the selection of natural-rural place-names symbolizes a *change*. The Jewish communities in the diaspora were mainly urban communities, and Jews were traditionally concentrated in occupations such as trade, finance, services and professions. The purpose of the various Zionist movements was to change the life of the Jewish people through settlement in Palestine, the ancient Homeland, where they would engage in productive work and become a socially and economically healthy nation.[12]

The ideology defined a mythical figure of the pioneer — a person engaged in manual labor, preferably farming. Rural life and farming communities became the most important vehicle of the settlement organizations: 70 percent of all the investments of the Jewish national funds were aimed at agricultural settlements.[13] The frequent application of natural-rural place-names reinforced the impression that the Jews had changed their occupational structure and became replanted in their ancient Homeland.

---

[12]Weintraub, D., Lissak, M., and Azmon, Y., *Moshava, Kibbutz and Moshav* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 3–5.

[13]Eisenstadt, *op. cit.*

THE NATIONAL-ZIONIST GROUP OF NAMES

The National-Zionist category is political and cultural in its character. It expresses the history of Jewish settlement in Palestine and reflects the Zionist ideology. Thus, Zionist leaders, pioneers, founders of villages, presidents and philanthropists are among the common themes in this group. Examples are Kefar Warburg (named after the Zionist leader Otto Warburg), Herzliya (after Theodore Herzl), Kefar *H*ayyim (after the Labor Leader *H*ayyim Arlozoroff), and Kefar HaNasi — named after the first president of the State of Israel, Chaim Weitzmann.

Some towns, mostly moshavot, are named after the philanthropist Baron Edmond de Rothschild and members of his family (Giv'at 'Ada, Pardés *H*anna, Zikhron Ya'aqov). Such Zionist religious leaders as Rabbis Kalisher and Kook are also commemorated in place-names of religious communities. A small sub-group is a group of settlements which are named after Jewish and Israeli writers and poets. Examples are Kefar Bialik named after the national poet *H*ayyim Nachman Bialik, and Yad Rambam named after the Jewish scholar and philosopher Rabbi Moshe Maimonides. There are a total of 146 settlements in this group, and the group is similar in proportion to the natural-rural group. Because Zionist ideology had a strong anti-urban bias,[14] the national-Zionist theme has a relatively low impact upon city and town nomenclature.

ABSTRACT-SYMBOLIC PLACE-NAMES

This sub-group of names has a specific commendatory meaning. Examples are Orim (Lights), *H*aruzim (the Industrious Ones), and 'Alumim (Youth). Attributes of this group are names that suggest positive properties, high quality, happiness and stability. Altogether, 65 settlements are included in this sub-group.

ARABIC ORIGIN PLACE-NAMES

A total of 59 settlements or 6.6% of the settlements have an Arabic origin. Some settlements were located on former Arab villages sites or in a close proximity to Arab villages from which they "borrowed" their name. Arab names were transformed to the Hebrew by translating the name as in the case of Ilania which is the translation of the Arab word Shajara. It means "A place

---

[14]Cohen, Erik, *The City in Zionist Ideology* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University [Institute of Urban and Regional Studies,] No. 12, 1970).

where there are trees'' in both languages. But more often the Hebrew name was chosen just because its sound was similar to the Arab one. Lavi (Lion) in Hebrew was Lubia (Beans) in Arabic and the two names do not have a common meaning. Nor is Neviot (Fountain Heads) a translation of the Arabic Nuweiba. Arabic names in Israel, as well as the Roman, Persian, Assyrian and Greek assist the researcher in understanding the cultural history of the country by tracing the impact of different cultures on the Israeli landscape. In a similar way, the British landscape manifests in its place-names the various people who invaded the British Islands such as the Celts, Romans, Angles, Saxons or Norsemen.

MILITARY-HEROISM PLACE-NAMES

This category is very similar in proportion to the Arabic-origin one. Eighty-five settlements in Israel carry names which symbolize important events in the establishment of the State, such as the Holocaust, the illegal immigration to Israel during the British Mandate period, the War of Independence and other wars. Thus, Yad Mordechai (Mordechai's Memorial) commemorates Mordechai Anielewicz, the last commander of the Warsaw Ghetto. 'En Sarid (Spring of the Survivors) was established by survivors of the concentration camps. Ben 'Ammi is a village named after a young commander who was killed in the War of Independence, and Givát Yo'av (Yoav's Hill) is a moshav in the Golan named after a commander who was killed in the 1967 campaign. These settlements and others are expressions of a national ideology which cherishes the people who sacrificed their lives for the country. Specific memorial, monuments, cultural and social halls and libraries (dedicated to those who were killed) are frequent in the Israeli landscape, and their significance is strengthened by special ceremonies in which the dead are memorialized. The post-statehood period, especially, when security and étatism became overriding ideological pillars, is one in which there has been considerable emphasis upon the military-heroism category.

INTERNATIONAL PLACE-NAMES

Many societies adopt place-names that originate in foreign countries. Immigrants as conquerors bring with them their cultural heritage to their new countries. The United States and Canada reflect their immigrant cultural diversity through French, German, Russian, Italian and Scandinavian place-names. In Israel, the village Bazra is named after Basra, Iraq, from where its settlers came. Also, Hodiyya is an adaptation of ''Hodu'' — the Hebrew word for India, which has the settlers' place of origin.

Another example of a place-name in Israel which has foreign sources is Balfouriyya, named after Lord Balfour, who was responsible for the declaration favoring establishment of a National Home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Ramat David (David Lloyd George), Ramat Yohanan (Jan Smuts), Kefar Blum (Leon Blum) and Kefar Truman (Harry Truman) are other examples named for the French-Jewish socialist Premier, and of settlements named after international leaders who were supportive of the Zionist cause. Two settlements named after American cities in gratitude for financial contributions from their Jewish communities are Mé 'Ammi (Miami) and Qiryat Mal'akhi (the Hebrew translation of Los Angeles). Only seventeen settlements in Israel have place-names of international origin, thus constituting the smallest category of place-names.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN PLACE-NAMES CATEGORIES IN THE PRE-STATE AND POST-STATE ERAS

As already mentioned, one thread of continuity can be traced in the nomenclature of Ancient-Biblical and Mishnaic-Talmudic place-names, which symbolize the ties between the Jewish people and its ancient Homeland. One thread of change was identified in the natural-rural place-names category which symbolizes the change in the social and economic structure of the Jewish community from its commercial and trades character in the diaspora, to the agricultural pioneering emphasis in Israel.

However, continuity and change can be traced for even narrower spans of time. The history of Jewish settlement in Palestine-Israel is divided into two different periods: the nation-building era beginning in 1878 (when the first immigration-wave to Palestine started), and 1948 when the State of Israel was founded. The later period is called state-formation era. Table 2 arranges place-names categories according to the two eras.

The table shows some interesting features. First, the ancient names were less important in the nation-building era than in the state-formation era. Continuity is an important element in the State of Israel's raison d'etre: the State, at times referred to as the Third Commonwealth, is regarded as the legal heir to the ancient Kingdom of Israel, and usage of Biblical names is perceived as strengthening this point. Another reason for the higher proportion of ancient names after statehood is that many of the new immigrants were traditionally-oriented Jews for whom Biblical settlement names were most fitting for their settlements. Natural-rural place-names show a slight decline from the pre-state to the post-state eras.

National-Zionist names show an interesting time-line trend. Zionist names

were significantly more important in the nation-building than in the state-formation era — 23 percent in the former and 11 percent in the latter. This is because the Zionist ideology was at its peak in the pre-State period. Many events, historical and political shaped the ideology and added to its contents. The pogroms, general socio-political currents, the Balfour declaration, the Second World War and the Holocaust are some of the events which had a strong impact on the ideology. Naming of places was immediate response to the events of the time, including recognition of Zionist philanthropists, as the following examples will show. ''Altneuland'' (Old-new Land) was written by Theodore Herzl between 1899-1902 and was translated into Hebrew in the beginning of the twentieth century. The Hebrew title of the volume was Tel Aviv (ancient mound and spring, the time of renewal), the name then given to the city founded in 1910. The kibbutz of Tel Yosef, commemorates Yosef Trumpeldor who fell with seven other pioneers defending Tel Hai, while kibbutz Giv'at Brenner commemorates Yosef *H*ayyim Brenner, the Socialist-Zionist writer. Giva't Nili is a moshav that bears the name of the World War One underground movement Nili. Yad *H*anna is named for Hanna Szenes, the Haganah heroine who was killed by the Nazis after parachuting into Europe to organize the Jewish underground, Ramat Razi'él for David Razi'él, the IZL commander who was killed leading a British-directed sabotage effort in Iraq, and Netiv Halamed He (the Road of the 35) for 35 Haganah youth killed trying to relieve Gush 'Ezyon during the War of Independence.

After statehood, the frequency of Zionist revolutionary events was lower and the policy of naming places only after people who passed away was introduced. As symbols of the period and as an outcome of the ideological context, the categories of National-Zionist and military-heroism place-names should be combined. They reflect the same ideological body which stressed immigration, settling the land, farming, and defense. Still, when the two categories are combined, 32 percent of the place-names in the pre-State era reflect the Zionist ideology, as compared to only 22 percent of place-names in the post-State era.

There is no significant time period difference in the abstract-symbolism category, and a very modest difference in Arabic-origin names, which were slightly more prevalent during pre-Statehood. However, there is a marked decrease in the frequency of use of names of international origin, from the nation-building to the state-formation eras. This trend can be understood, again, along the lines of the Zionist ideology. People like Balfour, Truman and Blum were represented in Israeli place-names because they had made major contributions to the realization of the Jewish state-idea. After statehood, the relationship of Israel with other nations became more normal, and the use of international names was reduced.

REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION OF PLACE-NAMES OF ISRAEL

Israel is divided into six Administrative Districts which are almost equal in population but not in the number of the settlements or the size of their areas. In order to establish relationship between place-names origins categories and a specific region, Tables 3 and 4 were compiled, the former including all settlements within the 1967 borders of Israel, and the latter including the areas beyond these borders.

Table 3 shows that three districts exceed the national average for the natural-rural category. The Northern and the Haifa Districts are higher than the national average. The Northern District includes the major rural areas and farming lands of Israel, i.e., the hills of Galilee, and the Jezreel and the Jordan Valleys. Physical geographical features are prominent in this district, and many settlements bear geographical features, as in the case of *En* Harod (The Spring of Harod), and Gan Shomron (The Garden of Samaria). It is interesting to note that this district, which lies mainly on the coastal plain has five settlements which use the sea, sea waves, the coast, etc. as prefixes or suffixes in their names (e.g., Ma'agan Mikhaél — the Anchorage of Michaél and Newé Yam-the oasis of the sea). The Tel Aviv District, which also is higher than the national average, has only six settlements; therefore, the data are not significant.

The Northern, Jerusalem, and Southern Districts have a higher proportion of ancient Biblical names compared to the other districts. Many settlements in these three districts were settled after statehood by immigrants from Middle Eastern countries. Although they moved into rural villages, these immigrants preferred traditional Biblical names to the natural-rural ones.

In the Jerusalem and the Northern Districts, such names simply follow the historical development of these regions: both had flourishing Jewish settlements in the Second Temple period and afterwards, and today's names are the names of the past. In the Jerusalem District are Moza and Bét Shemesh, the former located within a kilometer of a Biblical site, the latter five kilometers from its ancient counterpart. In the North, there are such examples as Meggido, located in close proximity to ancient Biblical Meggido, and Ginnosar, located a few kilometers from its Biblical counterpart.

The National-Zionist group has a higher frequency in the Haifa and the Central Districts than the national average. This reflects the fact that these regions were developed through the intensive efforts of the Zionist movement and institutions. These two regions commemorate many Zionist leaders, such as Leo Motzkin (Qiryat Motzkin), Max Nordau (Nordiyya), philanthropists such as Lord Benjamin Rothschild (Binyamina), and labor leaders such as Joseph Vitkin.

Abstract-symbolic names are especially common in the Central and the Southern Districts, although there is no obvious reason for such emphasis. The proportion of Arabic names is slightly higher in the Haifa and Jerusalem Districts, where some of the bitterest battles of the War of Independence were fought and many villages were abandoned by Arabs fleeing to the neighboring Arab states, to be resettled by Jews on the same or adjoining sites. War is also the reason for the Jerusalem District's high proportion of place-names with military-heroism symbolism. Finally, there is no particular regional emphasis for the international names category.

Comparison of place-names categories by regions administered by Israel outside its 1967 borders shows considerable regional variation, as well as some variations among categories. The abstract-symbolic and the Arabic origin categories are higher in the territories outside the 1967 borders, while the National-Zionist is much lower.

The Ancient-Biblical category, by far the largest, is disproportionally high in Judea and Samaria, and very low in Sinai and Gaza. This reflects the predominant role of Orthodox Israelis in West Bank settlement. On the other hand, the natural-rural is a very popular theme in Gaza and Sinai, both because of the paucity of historic Jewish sites there and because of the powerful impact of the desert environment, while it is very low in Judea and Samaria. The military-heroism category is well above average in the Golan where the heaviest military battles occurred in 1967 and 1973, while it is lowest in Judea and Samaria which has, with the exception of Jerusalem, experienced little military conflict.

That the National-Zionist theme is far below the average for the category in the pre-1967 borders reflects the post-1967 emphasis on traditional Jewish values at the expense of modern Zionist ones. Abstract-symbolic names, as well as Biblical ones, express the deeply spiritual and mystical qualities of recent settlement.

Arabic origin names are also considerably more popular among the newer than the veteran settlements. This is because most of the newer Israeli settlements have been located close to densely settled Arab villages and sites. They have adopted some of the Arabic names in Hebrew translation, or have taken Hebrew names that are similar to the Arabic ones.

SETTLEMENT-TYPES AND PLACE-NAMES CATEGORIES

A third way to analyze place-names adoption is according to the frequency of the categories among the different settlement types. One general settlement division is between towns, cities and villages. A more detailed division is not only between urban and rural settlements, but also among the rural

settlements which are organized according to kibbutzim, moshavim and moshavot. These sectoral organizations assist their villages in marketing, finance, central purchasing, and agricultural/industrial training.

One might expect the kibbutzim, which are affiliated to Labor Zionist movements, to be high in the National-Zionist and military-heroism place-names categories. Kibbutzim were founded by idealists and performed pioneering roles for the Israeli society. They also sent the highest proportion of their members to serve in the army (voluntarily, in addition to the mandatory military service), and in government and in the parties. Many members of the moshavim fulfilled national missions and pioneering roles, too, but to a lesser extent than those of the kibbutzim. Also, the majority of moshavim were established after statehood (1949) by immigrants who were religious, hence, there is the expectation that moshavim will tend to emphasize Biblical names. Moshavot were initially settled by traditional Jews, and many commemorate their founders — mostly members of the Rothschild clan; therefore, moshavot should be high in both the Biblical and National-Zionist categories. Table 5 presents the results. Not all of the above expectations are borne out by the results.

In general, prior to 1948, few cities were planned as cities. Those which existed were ancient cities (Jerusalem, Tiberias, Zefat), or emerged as urban places from moshavot. After 1948, when the State assumed settlement responsibility and dropped the anti-urban bias of pre-State Zionist ideology, a large number of planned cities and towns were built. Most adopted ancient Biblical names, accounting for the fact that more than half of all urban places fall into the Biblical category — significantly above the national average. Examples of Biblical place-names are Eilat, Ashod, Beersheba and Bet She'an. A post-1948 urban center is not likely to have a rural place-name, although some villages which have been urbanized still bear a natural-rural name, e.g., *H*adera (after a local stream), or Kefar Tavor (after a local mountain). Moshavim are also high in the ancient Biblical category, as expected, because many of them were settled by traditional Jews during the post-statehood period. Kibbutzim and moshavot on the other hand, have the lowest rank in this category.

In the natural-rural category of place-names, only kibbutzim and institutions are significantly higher than other settlements forms. All of these places have an ideological bias toward nature and ruralism, and they are located in rural environments.

Most surprising is the finding in the next category, National-Zionist place-names. Kibbutzim were expected to be higher than the national average in this category, but are lowest. Moshavim and institutions are close to the national average, cities and towns are similar to kibbutzim in being low, and

moshavot are highest. The high frequency for moshavot can be explained by the fact that they are the oldest settlement types in modern Israel, and assumed names commemorative of pre-Zionist leadership.

The low frequency of kibbutzim in the National-Zionist category is partially explained by the high position on the military-heroism category. Military heroism is an important, if distinct, part of the National-Zionist ideology. Voluntary service in dangerous missions was and is common among kibbutz members who have suffered the highest per-capita war casualties. Combining military-heroism and National-Zionist categories, kibbutzim follow the national average. For the other categories of place-names, abstract-symbolism, Arabic-origin, and international-origin, moshavot are above average for Arabic origin names, cities and towns are below average in military-heroism and international source names, and institutions are above average for the international sources, but below average for the military-heroism categories.

CONCLUSIONS

Place-names, in Israel and elsewhere in the world are an inherent part of the landscape made by humans — i.e., the cultural landscape. Place-names provide a clue to a culture, to ideology as part of a culture, to historical changes in both, and to regional-geographical variations. The dual nature of place-names is manifested in the power of creativity which they express, and in the fact that they reflect a certain environment, a certain history, and a certain culture.

Thus, place-names in Israel reflect the Jewish nationhood of the past by imprinting the landscape with Ancient-Biblical and Mishnaic-Talmudic place-names. These names emphasize the continuity of culture in the land of Israel for more than 3,000 years, and enhance the perception of Israel as the "land of the Bible" in the eyes of its settlers and outsiders:

Place-names in Israel also reflect the Jewish-Zionist ideology of redemption of the Jewish people in its ancient land. The Zionist ideological element in nomenclature is expressed by place-names which commemorate military heroes who died for the motherland, as well as the movement's founding leaders.

While the Zionist and military-heroism origins of place-names symbolize change and innovation in the cultural landscapes, Arabic-origin names, as with the Ancient-Biblical, strengthen the sense of cultural continuity. The natural-rural category has perhaps the "most geographical" place-names origin in Israel and reflects nature, topography, and rural life on two levels: the level of existence and the level of aspiration, the latter having strong roots in Zionist ideology.

Place-names have an important role to play in reinforcing and enriching elements of culture and ideology. Israel is, of course, not unique in its strategy of using place-names to deliver nation-building "messages" to its citizenry. Throughout the Third World, place-names are used to symbolize liberation, independence and natural pride. In Africa, for example, one of the very first acts of decolonization was that of name-changing by independent states — e.g., Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia) and Malawi (Nyasaland).

Zaire, a local name for the river Congo, was adopted by the former Belgian colony. Ghana (the Gold Coast) and Mali (part of French West Africa) are the names of past African empires. Names of cities that had once commemorated European colonial rulers were changed — Léopoldville to Kinshasa (the Congo), and Elizabethville to Lumumbashi (after Patrice Lumumba).

In almost all of the African and in many Asian states, the trend to transform colonial to native names has been a general one. "Returning to roots" and cultural pride are the major objective, with natural-rural and abstract-symbolic terms playing a paramount role. However, few if any states have proceeded in so organized and widely systemic a fashion as Israel. There the challenge has been less that of ad hoc place-name substitutions to erase the colonial past, than that of creating new places with new names that will strengthen the ties of the people to their land, and that reflect changing currents in national values.

Thus, while in Israel the major themes of naming places recur in space and time, they change in frequency of use with changes in ideological values and historic events. The relative decline in the use of the National-Zionist theme since 1949, the persistent strength of the Ancient-Biblical and natural-rural categories, and the consistency of use of names of military-heroism origin reflect the interplay of continuity and change that have marked Israel's development. Landscapes of place, of which place-names is an important aspect, are most certainly an expression of landscapes of the mind. The world's landscapes are but the screen on which the past, present, and anticipated cosmic vanity of mankind is written.[15]

Queens College, C.U.N.Y.
University of Haifa

---

[15]Houston, James M., "The Concepts of 'Place' and 'Land' in the Judeo-Christian Tradition," in D. Ley and M. Samuels (eds.), *Humanistic Geography* (London: Groom Helm, 1978), pp. 224–237.

Table 1. Israeli Place-Names Categories by Major Cateories*

Category	Kibbutzim	Moshavim	Moshavot	Towns and Cities	Institutions	Total N	%
Ancient-Biblical/Talmudic	64	203	10	38	35	350	39.5
Natural-Rural	52	73	6	13	23	167	18.2
National-Zionist	27	79	11	9	20	146	16.5
Abstract-Symbolic	21	31	3	5	5	65	7.2
Arabic Origin	18	26	4	6	5	59	6.6
Military-Heroism	39	41	—	1	4	85	9.6
International Source	5	7	—	1	4	17	2.4
Total	226	460	34	73	96	889	100.0%

Source: Israel Ministry of Defense, Israel-Sites and Places (Hebrew), Ministry of Defense Publication Services, Jerusalem: Karta, sixth edition, 1978.
  *Only Jewish settlements are included in the analysis. Arab settlements have a different pattern of naming.

Table 2. Israeli Place-Names Categories: Pre-State and Post-State

Categories	1880-1948 Pre-State N	%	1949-1979 State N	%	Total N	%
Ancient-Biblical/Talmudic	(101)	29.3	(249)	45.8	(350)	39.5%
Natural-Rural	(71)	20.5	(96)	17.7	(167)	18.2%
National-Zionist	(81)	23.5	(65)	12.0	(146)	16.5%
Abstract-Symbolic	(26)	7.6	(39)	7.2	(65)	7.2%
Arabic Origin	(28)	7.8	(31)	5.7	(59)	6.6%
Military-Heroism	(28)	8.1	(57)	10.5	(85)	.9.6%
International Source	(11)	3.2	(6)	1.1	(17)	2.4%
Total	(346)	100%	(543)	100%	(889)	100%

Source: As in Table 1.

Table 3. Israeli Place-Names Categories by Pre-1967 Geographical Regions*

Categories	Northern District		Haifa District		Central District		Tel-Aviv District		Jerusalem District		Southern District		All Settlements	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ancient-Biblical/Talmudic	(80)	34.1	(6)	8.2	(56)	27.0	(3)	15	(18)	34.1	(71)	39.2	(234)	29.7%
Natural-Rural	(50)	22.1	(17)	23.3	(22)	10.5	(6)	30	(9)	17.0	(26)	14.4	(130)	19.4%
National-Zionist	(29)	12.1	(25)	34.3	(52)	25	(6)	30	(10)	19.0	(24)	13.3	(146)	18.7%
Abstract-Symbolic	(31)	12.9	(6)	8.2	(41)	19.7	(1)	5	(3)	5.6	(36)	19.9	(118)	13.1%
Arabic Origin	(25)	10.5	(11)	15.1	(17)	8.2	(4)	10	(6)	11.3	(10)	5.5	(73)	8.7%
Military-Heroism	(13)	5.3	(6)	8.2	(17)	8.2		–	(6)	11.3	(11)	6.0	(53)	8.3%
International	(7)	3	(2)	2.7	(3)	1.4		–	(1)	1.8	(3)	1.7	(16)	2.1%
Total	(235)	100%	(73)	100%	(208)	100%	(20)	100%	(53)	100%	(181)	100%	(770)	100%

Source: As in Table 1. Only Jewish settlements located within Israel's pre-1967 borders are included.

Table 4. Israeli Place-Names Categories by Geographical Regions Outside the Pre-1967 Borders

Categories	Golan Heights		Sinai and Gaza Strip		Judia and Samaria		All Settlements	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ancient-Biblical/Talmudic	(7)	26.8%	(1)	4.8%	(20)	50	(28)	31.8%
Natural-Rural	(5)	18.3%	(9)	56.8%	(2)	5%	(16)	18.2%
National-Zionist	–		(3)	14.4%	(2)	5%	(5)	5.7%
Abstract-	(5)	18.3%	(3)	14.4%	(7)	17.5%	(15)	17%
Arabic Origin	(5)	18.3%	(3)	14.4%	(7)	17.5%	(15)	17%
Military-Heroism	(5)	18.3%	(2)	9.6%	(2)	5%	(9)	10.3%
International Source	–		–		–		–	
Total	(27)	100%	(21)	100%	(40)	100%	(88)	100%

Source: As in Table 1. The Golan Heights have been formally annexed to Israel, and the Jewish Sinai settlements have been abandoned with Israel's return of the Sinai to Egypt.

Table 5. Israeli Settlement-Types by Place-Name Categories.

Category	Kibbutzim		Moshavim		Moshavot		Towns and Cities		Institutions		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ancient-Biblical/Talmudic	(64)	28.3%	(230)	50%	(10)	29.4%	(38)	52.1%	(35)	36.4%	(350)	39.5%
Natural-Rural	(52)	23.0%	(73)	15.9%	(6)	17.6%	(13)	17.7%	(23)	24%	(167)	18.2%
National-Zionist	(27)	11.5%	(79)	17.3%	(11)	32.4%	(9)	12.3%	(20)	20.8%	(146)	16.5%
Abstract-Symbolic	(21)	9.3%	(31)	6.8%	(3)	8.8%	(5)	6.9%	(5)	5.2%	(65)	7.2%
Arabic Origin	(18)	8.4%	(26)	5.6%	(4)	11.8%	(6)	8.2%	(5)	5.2%	(59)	6.6%
Military-Heroism	(39)	17.3%	(41)	8.9%	—		(1)	1.4%	(4)	4.2%	(85)	9.6%
International Source	(5)	2.2%	(7)	1.5%	—		(1)	1.4%	(4)	4.2%	(17)	2.4%
Total	(226)	100%	(460)	100%	(34)	100%	(73)	100%	(96)	100%	(889)	100%

Source: As in Table 1.